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Upon this rock star

COMMONWEAL

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THE LAITY

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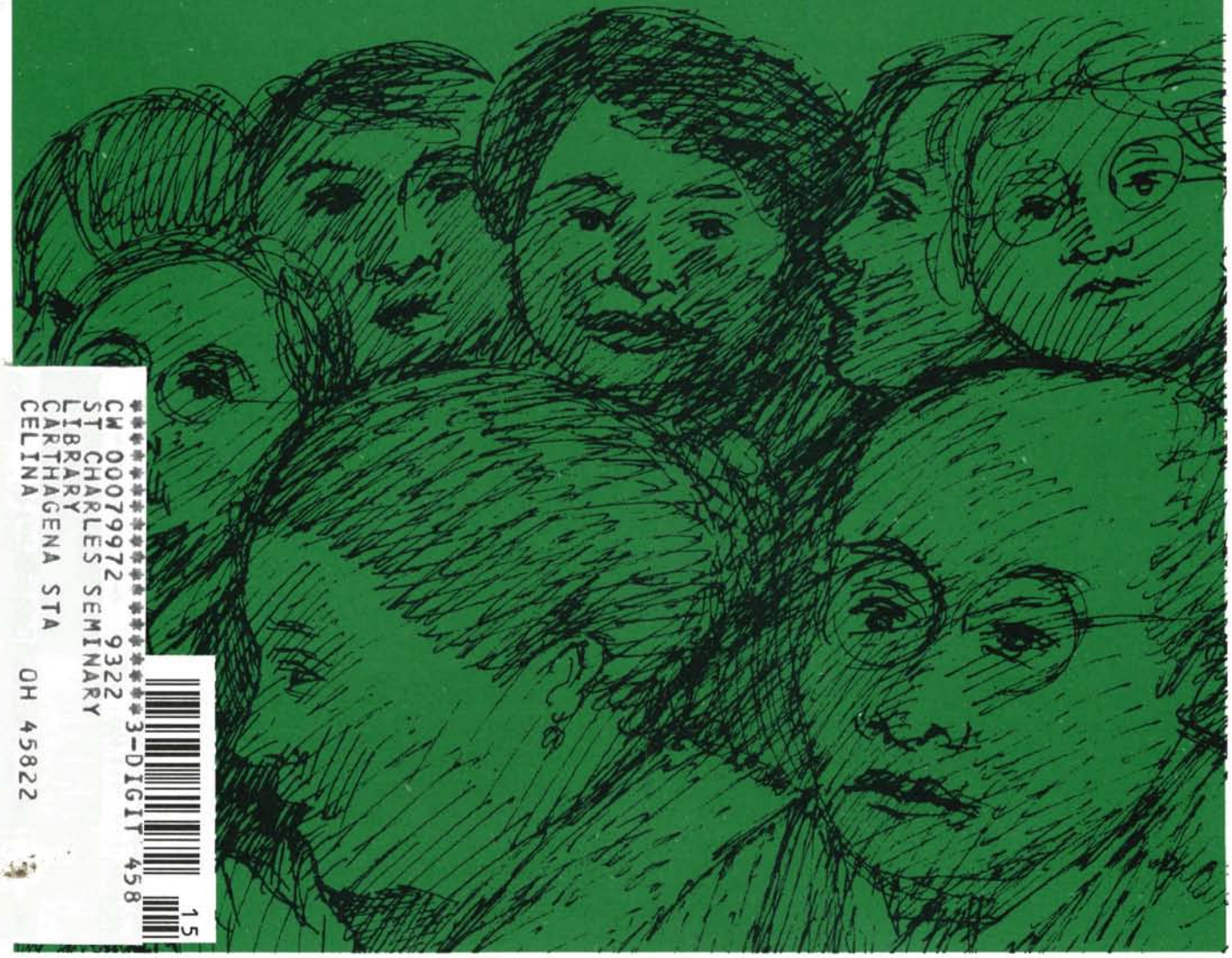

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CORRESPONDENCE

Sensus infidelium?

Oakland, Calif.

To the Editors: Bishop Kenneth Untener's article ["*Humanae vitae*: What Has It Done to Us?" June 16] is an interesting example of modern casuistry. The bishop pussyfoots around the question by such statements as "...[W]hether you think that *Humanae vitae* is correct or incorrect in its position on birth control...," but his implication is that the encyclical's teaching is incorrect. Since, as he goes on to imply, that is the opinion of most churchmen, their public defense of the encyclical's antibirth-control doctrine constitutes a "lack of integrity" that has initiated a crisis of credibility among the faithful, which has further damaged the credibility of church authority in many other areas.

Bishop Untener draws an analogy (which he admits is not perfect) with primitive maps of North America. As subsequent experience with the land and the application of progressive scientific methods demonstrate, the primitive maps were wrong in symbolizing the basic terrain. He compares bishops and priests who publicly defend *Humanae vitae*, whether directly or by "a conspiracy of silence," to stubborn, unreasonable defenders of the primitive maps over the accurate modern ones.

The bishop's analogy is clever but does not apply. Cartography is a purely empirical science; that is, it must always depend upon experience. The same cannot be said about the church's constant teaching concerning marriage and the family. But if we are to continue with the bishop's analogy, the terrain here is clearly and accurately mapped out, as it were, by the pope as guardian and spokesman of the magisterium. Subsequent experience and science can only fill in certain details (like the variations of the rhythm method) while leaving the terrain intact.

Bishop Untener's concern is primarily with the "lack of integrity"—or let us call it what it is: hypocrisy—of the churchmen who do not really accept the doctrine of *Humanae vitae* but, in a cynical way, transparent to the laity, publicly stick to it. Thus the crisis of credibility. I should think he would be more concerned with the churchmen's internal denial of the magisterium. He is correct in seeking ways of communicating truth compatible with contemporary receptivity, but why must these ways inevitably bow to modernist error simply because polls indicate that most people live by the error? Many bishops and priests sincerely accept the teachings of the encyclical and do not consider themselves primitive and outdated. Surely we cannot be included in the dilemma described by Bishop Untener.

He is probably correct in saying that the majority of Catholics do not accept the teachings of the encyclical (although in my experience many Catholics do accept them). He attributes this to the *sensus fidelium*, which, apparently, implies that Pope Paul, his predecessors, and his successors are wrong. But the *sensus fidelium* is a tricky thing. It applies only in union with the popes as teachers. Otherwise the church could scarcely survive. At one time in history there were more Arians than orthodox Catholics. What about the *sensus fidelium* then? During the Reformation most of Northern Europe (including the bishops) went Protestant; what about the *sensus fidelium* then? Polls indicate that today a majority of Catholics believe in divorce and remarriage, and even believe that abortion is not sinful in many cases. I would suggest that a better analogy than map drawing for Bishop Untener would be the tail wagging the dog.

The contraceptive mentality has proved devastating. Once you separate openness to offspring from sexuality, you open the doors to about everything the imagination can devise when pleasure or even mutual comfort is the goal. Doubtless it is very difficult for married couples today, what with the pace of modern life, the economy, consumerism, and the enticements of hedonism. Pope Paul VI recognized this. *Humanae vitae* is a beautiful document and a challenge to Christian families. Bishop Untener points out, correctly, that few lay people have read it. Rather than falling into the cynical word service or silence the bishop describes, which indeed results in a crisis of credibility, we churchmen should, with enthusiasm, encourage the faithful to study it and rise to its challenge. The world today desperately needs their witness.

GERALD A. BUCKLEY, O.P.

Remember Athanasius!

Bethesda, Md.

To the Editors: Bishop Untener is right when he says that *Humanae vitae* has not been accepted by the majority of U.S. Catholics. But, since the teaching is true, the bishop needs to remember Saint Athanasius. The entire episcopate was Arian, yet the Trinity was proclaimed.

The good bishop needs to raise his thinking to the faith level which he was ordained to teach. Without faith it is not possible to see the human person in full perspective. Paul VI said it all when he invited us to see our life not only here and

(Continued on page 28)

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COMMONWEAL

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It could be worse

President Bill Clinton went to Washington promising "change," but it is doubtful that the majority of American voters are ready for the kind of change Clinton represents. The tortuous and histrionic politicking surrounding the passage last month of his $496-billion deficit reduction and tax bill was manifest evidence of that political reality. Elected with only 43 percent of the popular vote, the president remains politically vulnerable. The near failure of the budget—even after being stripped of its stimulus package and energy tax—was a vivid sign of the Democratic coalition's fragility. Moreover, the budget's failure to attract even one Republican vote in either the House or the Senate was a sober reminder of the continuing strength of antitax sentiment nationwide.

Ross Perot's folksy, demagogic campaign against the budget bill obviously took its toll. In the present knee-jerk antigovernment atmosphere, Clinton can expect no help from Republicans eager to piggyback on the Perot phenomenon. To be sure, the administration allowed the Republicans to define the budget as a "tax and spend" issue and failed to build bridges to moderate Republicans. Neither were the Democrats above gerrymandering the truth when it came to what was a tax increase or a spending cut. But the Republicans, especially Senate Minority Leader Bob Dole (R-Kans.), seemed to relish the prospect of further legislative stalemate in Washington.

Not a pretty picture. Still, even this budget is a step in the right direction. Based on realistic assumptions about economic growth, it should lower the annual deficit from this year's $300 billion to $200 billion by 1997, or from 4.3 percent of GNP to 2.7 percent. That should introduce a measure of stability to government spending. Despite these efforts, however, the deficit is expected to start climbing again in 1997 as the U.S. population ages and entitlement spending, especially health care, rises. Thus Clinton is right to insist that the nation now turn its attention to health-care reform.

Despite cries about how the Clinton budget surreptitiously taxes the middle class, almost all the money to finance deficit reduction will come from the wealthiest Americans. A greater progressivity has been reintroduced into the tax code, raising the marginal rate of income tax for the top 2 percent of wage earners from 31 to 39 percent. Arguments about the economic efficiency of such taxes, especially in a weak economy, are complex and largely inconclusive. Politically most Americans agree that the wealthy, who by any measure did extremely well thanks to the policies of two Republican presidents responsible for quadrupling the national debt, are in the best position to help put the nation's public finances in order.

Among the budget's more enlightened programs are the increase in funding for the earned-income tax credit and the 4.3-cent-a-gallon gas tax. The earned-income

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About this issue:

Once again *Commonweal* devotes an entire September issue to the current status and future prospects of the laity. Reflecting the vibrant and sprawling reality of the laity, we have chosen a vibrant and sprawling graphic layout to match. Here's the roster: *Commonweal* Editor Margaret O'Brien Steinfels leads off, and with Chicago-bred frankness issues marching orders to the troops (begin on page 8 and jump obediently to page 16 and on and on...). Frank Macchiarola, jogging from page 9 to pages 10, 11, and 12, sees something in campus ministry he'd like to bring home to residential parishes. Bud Johnson remembers his loyal Catholic grandfather (page 9 and then on to pages 13 and 14), while Brian Doyle reports on the physical and spiritual findings of his annual self check-up (start on page 9 and skip to 15 and 16). Finally, Regina Plunkett Dowling (page 11) gives the phrase "cafeteria Catholic" a whole new meaning, and manages to do it in just one page! In the book section, where the layout is more continuous, Dennis O'Brien, John B. Breslin, and Dennis M. Doyle bring us up to speed on the supernatural, college Catholics, and lay ministry, respectively. And if you think Catholics have to worry only about the four last things, check out Adrian J. Reimers's piece on page 22. Enjoy, but don't put too much on your cafeteria tray at once.

THE EDITORS

tax credit will supplement the income of working poor people, counteracting incentives in the current welfare system that discourage people from working. The gas tax, though small, is a step toward a broader-based energy tax. Energy taxes, used throughout the rest of the industrialized world, are a spur to economic efficicency and an obvious benefit to the environment.

It is safe to say that the Republican charge that the budget's tax increases will derail the recovery are spurious. For better or for worse, the budget's effect on the $6-trillion-a-year U.S. economy will be small. Advocates of increased spending for social programs will have little to cheer about. Shrewdly sabotaged by the Reagan administration's military and deficit spending, any expansion of domestic programs will be held hostage to the deficit debate for the foreseeable future. That future must somehow foster a growing awareness among the middle class that the problems facing American society—problems of structural unemployment and widespread economic insecurity, of crime, race, drugs, and health care—will not be solved through narrow interest-group politics, even if that interest group is the populous middle class. Expanding opportunity for all Americans requires an expanding economy, and an expanding economy requires public investment in education, job training, and infrastructure. Eventually the need for "sacrifice," a concept Clinton broached in his inaugural address but subsequently abandoned for fear of its political costs, will have to be faced. For now, Clinton must build on the modest step his budget victory embodies. Educating the public is the task of every president, and this president has yet to master that skill. Meanwhile, those who are running out of patience with the pace of change should consider how much worse things might be. All you have to do to envision the alternative is to take a long hard look at Mr. Perot.

UPON THIS ROCK STAR

Pope John Paul II's visit to Denver last month for World Youth Day caused a great deal of media interest in things Catholic. And by that, of course, we mean sex, sexism, and pedophilia.

Just kidding!

Even we here at 15 Dutch Street were inundated by calls from "major" media outlets such as CNN, "The MacNeil-Lehrer News Hour," the BBC, and ABC's "Good Morning America." Some of you might have seen *Commonweal* Editor Margaret O'Brien Steinfels on "Good Morning America" complimenting the pope on his exchange of scriptural readings with President Bill Clinton. For our overseas readers, we eagerly await news of how Managing Editor Patrick Jordan appeared in his BBC "soundbite," which was filmed here on the premises. Clearly, the pope is the answer to most of our promotional problems.

We, like all Catholics, were happy to have John Paul in America, impressed by his robust health, and humbled by his equally robust moral certainty. We were less pleased with the general quality of discussion surrounding the pope's visit. On the television interview shows, the tendency was to cast liberals against conservatives, Rome against America, the pope against the people. Around the television dial, conservative Catholics intoned solemnly and erroneously about the "unchanging" nature of truth and Catholic practice, while liberals spoke expansively of a Holy Spirit that seemed capable of inspiring the most contradictory impulses. A disinterested viewer would be hard-pressed to come away from the media coverage with the idea of a monolithic Catholic church. Good—and it's about time. Somewhat worrisome, however, is the suspicion that conflict within the church merely mirrors the predictable divisions and antagonisms of contemporary culture. As if we had no problems of our own!

The fervent reception accorded the pope surprised us. Despite a certain instinctive skepticism about mass public spectacle, the sincerity and enthusiasm of the 300,000 who greeted the pope in Denver also impressed us. Many of the young people were especially touching as they spoke of the isolation they feel in a culture often eager to dismiss Catholicism as a historical curiosity or an authoritarian affront. That isolation will not be cured by a papal rally, but if such a gathering offered a glimpse of the social and spiritual solidarity Catholicism embodies, at its best, the pope deserves our thanks.

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ET CETERA

THERE'S GOT TO BE A BETTER WAY Vatican misspokesman Archbishop John Foley astonished at least some viewers of "This Week with David Brinkley" by telling Cokie Roberts of ABC News that some parishes where priests have molested children have produced a higher number of vocations than parishes not so afflicted. Such anecdotal comment would have been comic if it weren't so appalling. God may work in mysterious ways, but not, we trust, in this way.

FATHER KNOWS BEST? Defending celibacy in *Newsweek*, the Reverend Andrew Greeley revealed the rather startling results of yet another survey. "My research shows...," Greeley writes, "that a confidant relationship between a celibate priest and a married woman produces a payoff in marital happiness and sexual fulfillment for both her and her husband."

If this is indeed the case, the priest shortage may prove more catastrophic than we had feared.

OF SEVERAL MINDS Abigail McCarthy

'A CIVILIZATION OF LOVE'

THE POPE IN DENVER

By the time you read this the pope will have been long gone and the joyous, loving faces of the young people in Denver may have faded from our memories. But I hope that the absence of contention there and the determination to celebrate that which binds all Catholics will stay with us.

For many of us the quality of the response of the young who came to Denver (and of most of the adults who came with them) was unexpected. Unwittingly, perhaps, we have accepted the attitude adopted by much of the media—an attitude fed by a recent Gallup poll documenting the disagreement of many American Catholics with the teachings of the church. For example, James L. Franklin, writing in the *Boston Globe* (August 8) predicted that "there may not be as much enthusiasm for the pope's visit as there was at his first U.S. visit in 1979....Crowds were smaller when he returned in 1987 for a visit to the South and West."

Franklin quoted Gerald P. Fogarty, S.J., author of *The Vatican and the American Hierarchy*: "He comes at a time of a certain amount of demoralization in the American church, part of which was due to his conservatism and part due to a very low priestly morale, which is in turn due to the problem of sexual abuse."

Other stories anticipating the pope's coming stressed the misgivings of some young people. Not only did they take issue with the church on sexual issues but they felt that it was not "cool" to be Catholic. "If you go to church," said one college student, "you slip out of the dorm—you don't tell anyone where you're going." There were to be demonstrations by pro-choice Catholics, gays and lesbians, and the Women's Ordination Conference. Hostile cartoons appeared, and there were reports of ribald night club acts as well as a virtual field day of criticism on the radio talk shows. Some of us were formidably reminded of the old saying, "anti-Catholicism is the anti-Semitism of the intellectuals." (While the pope was still in Jamaica before arriving in Mexico and then Denver, I was appalled at being approached by a prominent woman lawyer asking, in what I suppose was an attempt at humor, what I thought the "perp" was up to "lecturing *us* about violence.")

Even as the pope was being hailed by happy hundreds of thousands, newspaper headlines and TV news reports strove to make much of the pope's supposed surprising of President Bill Clinton by referring to abortion during their meeting. Apart from the fact that no reasonable reporter would expect the pope to avoid the issue, it was apparent that the pope's reference was almost oblique, only urging Americans to "defend life," and he certainly did not take issue with any specific Clinton stance. In fact, at one point he seemed to have made a tactful decision to eliminate the final words of a 1987 speech to which he referred: "and protect the human person from conception to natural death."

Meanwhile something very different was happening in Denver, something the commentators and anchors were missing but something very apparent to those watching the crowds and seeing their interaction with the pope, for whom their love was palpable. Queried, one after the other, whether they came from the varied regions of the United States or were youth

"All I can say is, we didn't have this crazy weather when the pope was Italian."

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delegates from abroad—France, Mexico, Italy, Pakistan—they struggled for the words to tell how they felt about the pope and what he meant to them. He was to them the personification of faith, "of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." He was the living symbol of the worldwide church in which they found their unity and identity. He was the emblem of the transcendent in their lives.

That which was ineffable superseded whatever they disagreed with in his teaching—and disagree they did in many instances. But that did not affect the love they found in his message and in the mission he entrusted to them. They were ready to build "the civilization of love" to which he summoned them. They were enthusiastic about taking up the task "of the defense of human life" (however they might interpret that) and "the promotion of human rights"; and they found the beginning of the "civilization of love" in his message itself.

"There's such wonderful love in his message," said one eighteen-year-old American, echoing what many others had said, and a young woman from Uganda expressed what many others felt when she said that having seen and touched the pope, she knew she could return home and do the work of helping others of which he spoke. It was this rapport with the young—to some extent a newfound rapport—that impressed our American bishops more than his words.

The media, so obsessed by the apparent conflict between American Catholics and their church, might have been better prepared for the joy and love in Denver, had they listened to the Reverend Richard John Neuhaus, when he said, "After twenty-five years of what many view of confusion sometimes verging on chaos, I think people are ready for a celebration of continuity and stability and the vibrant ministry of the Catholic church" (*Boston Globe*, August 8).

As the days in Denver went by, the pope himself seemed warmed by the realization that the beginnings of his "civilization of love" already existed. It was perhaps this realization that caused him to expunge some of the sterner remarks from his final message, to depart from the text, and to reaffirm the celebration of faith and unity which was the Denver experience. □

OF SEVERAL MINDS David R. Carlin, Jr.

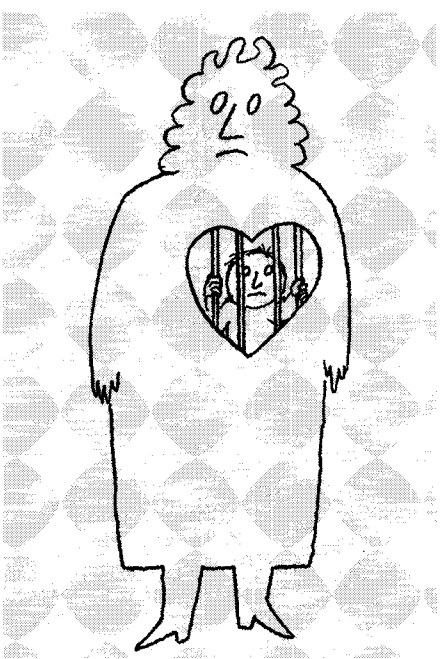
GOING, GOING, GONE

THE DIMINUTION OF THE SELF

In the course of her confirmation hearing before the Senate Judiciary Committee, Ruth Bader Ginsburg, the newest justice of the United States Supreme Court, said that the right to abortion is essential to a woman's autonomy.

The word is striking. Its etymology gives its meaning: self-rule, from the Greek word "nomos"—rendered into English as "rule" or "law." If you are autonomous, you are self-governing. You give the law to yourself, as opposed to having it imposed on you by someone else.

In connecting abortion and autonomy, Justice Ginsburg hit a certain nail right on the head. Prochoice people come in many varieties. At one end of the spectrum is the mere pragmatist, who opines: "I don't know if abortion is right or wrong, but I'm sure glad my girlfriend got one." At the other end is the true-believing ideologue, who dogmatizes: "The right to abortion is among a small number of fundamental human rights, and therefore it must not be infringed upon in any way." In saying abortion is essential to a woman's autonomy, Ginsburg spoke in the precise accents of those at the ideological end of the continuum. I don't say she is herself an ideologue; only time will tell. But she found just the right word to express the ideological point of view. No wonder the abortion radicals have overcome their initial reservations about her.



It does not take much listening to prochoice true believers in order to grasp that autonomy is their cardinal issue. What's at stake for them in abortion is not, except incidentally, sexual conduct or population control or health or money or getting through college or avoiding so-called "unwanted children" or any of the myriad of reasons commonly given to justify abortion rights. At bottom, the issue is moral autonomy. When the ideologue demonstrates a sense of outrage at the prospect of even the slightest legal restrictions on abortion, she (usually she, though on occasions he) is totally sincere. Anti-abortion legislation is seen as tantamount to telling women that they are not capable of self-rule; that they are not free agents; that they are not fully adult (a privilege reserved for men); that they are to remain in a state of quasi-servitude.

The concept of moral autonomy was introduced into modern philosophy by Immanuel Kant late in the eighteenth century. Kant was convinced that the freedom and dignity of the human person required that the individual obey only those laws given by himself or herself. To have laws imposed on one from the outside, even when the outside lawgiver is God, is to be in the unhappy condition of heteronomy. This was a radical thought indeed, and at first glance it would seem to lead to anarchy. For if we have a million different individuals giving law to themselves, won't this result in a million different laws? You, for instance, may think stealing is always wrong; I may think it is permissible in extreme situations; and this third fellow (the one who never re-

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turns your pen when you let him borrow it) thinks one is free to steal whenever one likes.

But not to worry. Kant, though a theoretical radical, was a practical traditionalist. True, I must obey only myself, you must obey only yourself, Jones must obey only himself, etc. But what if it turns out that my lawgiving self, your lawgiving self, and Jones's lawgiving self are the same self? This is pretty much what Kant concluded: though we are different selves for many purposes, we have in common an identical lawgiving self, called Practical Reason. If so, then a million people don't enact a million laws; there is one law for all; anarchy is prevented; autonomy and universality are reconciled, living happily together ever after.

Whether we agree with this theory or not, it reminds us that the concept of moral autonomy makes no sense apart from the concept of self. If I am to obey only my self, then everything depends on how I conceive this self. If (Kant-like) I think of my self as Practical Reason, then obedience to self is obedience to universal law. If (Plato-like) I conceive my self as a soul having a destiny beyond the grave, then I must act in obedience to the immortal interests of this soul. If (Aristotle-like) I conceive my self as a rational substance whose full reality is achieved in the course of a lifetime, then I should act in obedience to the lifetime interests of this substance.

Now what theory of self is held by abortion ideologues? Unfortunately the prochoice movement has published no official metaphysics, so we have no authoritative account of its theory. But it seems safe to say that among prochoice ideologues neither a Kantian nor a Platonic nor (despite some superficial resemblances) an Aristotelian conception of self prevails. The self that is obeyed when an abortion decision is made is the temporary self, the self of today, the self that exists at the moment of decision. The idea is that as long as the woman obeys this ephemeral self, she is autonomous. It doesn't matter that in obeying the temporary self she may have violated the deepest requirements of her substantial self or immortal self or universal self.

"But wait a minute!" someone will object. "These fanciful notions of universal or immortal or rational-substance selves are highly dubious. In a pluralist society we cannot operate on the basis of such premises. If you wish to hold grandiose notions of the self in private, that's your business. But for public policy purposes, we have no choice but to stick to a concept of the empirical self that no one can doubt, which is the self of the moment: the minimal self."

Exactly: the minimal self. The concept of morality and the concept of the self, though two distinct concepts, cannot be separated from each other. Unrestricted abortion has become morally acceptable in America only in association with an attack on the very idea of morality. Increasingly we have come to think of morality as a subjective preference, not an objective requirement; and the further we carry this line of thought, the more acceptable abortion appears, being only one more subjective preference. But this chipping away of the idea of morality is inseparable from an erosion of the idea of self. A minimal morality will beget a minimal self, and vice versa. In contrast to the noise that has accompanied the abortion battle, the erosion of self has been a quiet process—but a process already far advanced, as the foregoing observations remind us.

How ironic, that a movement which exalts the autonomy of self should be in process of destroying the very idea of self. It reminds one of that notorious remark from the Viet Nam War: "It was necessary to destroy the village in order to save it."

And how logically consistent, that an ideology which deprives its clients of all but a minimal self should not hesitate to deprive an unborn child of its physical self. For if self is reduced to the decision-making self of the moment, then the unborn, not being capable of making a decision, cannot be a self. From which it follows that one may abort without the least bit of a bad conscience. Regarded from this point of view, the act of abortion may be defined as the elimination of a nonself by a minimal self.

In the meantime, best wishes to Justice Ginsburg as she begins her new career. Which is to say, let's hope her judicial conscience gets the better of her ideological propensities. □

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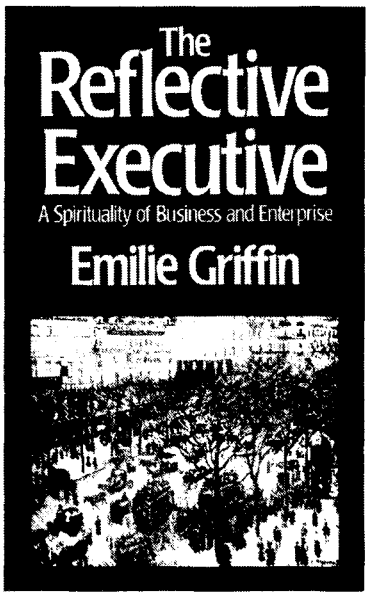

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THE LAITY & THE LEADERSHIP CRISIS

Margaret O'Brien Steinfels

The Catholic church in the United States is a large, diverse, and contradictory body.

It is 55 million people from virtually every country, ethnic, and racial grouping in the world.

It is a church variously distrusted or admired for its authority and clear line of command. Yet it has no central budget; authority is decentralized in 196 dioceses and exercised by 397 bishops; its primary activities are carried out in some 17,000 parishes. It is a church with an unmatched network of elementary schools, high schools, colleges and universities, social welfare agencies, and hospitals; yet many of these institutions are having to answer unsettling questions about their Catholic identity and their links to the larger church.

It is a church with marked regional variations. A certain immigrant defensiveness and pugnaciousness can still be observed in the Archdioceses of New York and Boston; while the Archdioceses of Chicago and Milwaukee, where Catholicism is the dominant religious group, convey a more open attitude toward their political and social surroundings. Hispanic Catholicism, long present in the Southwest, increasingly dominates the church there, including Southern California and the country's largest archdiocese, Los Angeles. In the Old South and the Northwest, where Catholics are a minority, a different spirit prevails—one seeming to combine the decorum of a minority with the independence of the unencumbered.

Yet, for all of its breadth and variety, the Catholic church can look more like a beached whale than an effective and efficient organization. For example—a painful one—consider the difficulty U.S. Catholic bishops have had in coming to grips with the sexual abuse of children by priests. Though the response is a diocesan prerogative, it is clearly a national problem. Both the abuse and the dilatory response affect the victims and their families first and most sorely, but they beset the whole church as well. Mistrust erodes the morale of parish priests; bishops are seen as irresponsible, negligent, defensive; the church itself is seen as fostering hypocrisy. Meantime, charges and defenses continue without any authoritative body acting decisively: the bishops' conference offers advice rather than direction; the Vatican resists the removal of priests found guilty of child sexual abuse.

While many non-Catholics continue to think of the church as a clone of the U.S. Marine Corps, this crisis shows an institution with neither the efficient oversight of a monolithic institution nor the effective command structure of an authoritarian one. No Vatican official can send thunderbolts, Zeus-like, down on this energetic, quarrelsome, and disorderly church.

In some ways, that is reassuring; efficiency and conformity are not the highest Christian values. But, quite apart from the pedophilia scandal, American Catholics must soon face up to certain pressing questions about the church's future: above all a looming leadership crisis. Unless we face it squarely, the richness, diversity, and resources of our church will be sadly depleted over the next generation.

What is required? American Catholics must set about the work of defining those elements of a Catholic identity that will provide coherence and cohesion over the next century to institutions and groups operating in the Catholic tradition. This must be done in a time when a large portion of the culture bearers—the institutional personnel, and those who work at maintaining that culture and defining that identity—will be lay people, rather than clergy and religious. And this task must be carried out within a context, that is, American society, which is at best genially indifferent, at worst hostile to such an effort.

The Second Vatican Council is often cited as the cause of this chaos, the great break in the history of a monolithic-authoritarian church (of some golden age) and today's disarray. The council's teachings do serve as a demarcation line between traditionalists and radicals, liberals and con-

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THE LAITY

GIVE IT THAT OLD COLLEGE TRY

Frank J. Macchiarola

I have observed and participated in the campus religious life of several colleges and universities over many years. Campus ministers usually understand that they face a major challenge in developing and maintaining a sense of community. Few of those they minister to are born into a campus community and few die there; each semester, students go and new ones come. This turnover guarantees that community must be renewed constantly if it is to survive, let alone prosper. In order to meet this challenge, campus ministers must delegate to others a number of important tasks. The result is a dynamic and changing community that Catholics rarely encounter elsewhere in the church.

Because this temporary condition is understood, campus religious communities treat the phenomenon of "passing through" in a confident way. Just as Christians are supposed to think of death as passage to a greater life, these Christian communities treat passage to a different community following graduation in a positive way. The process of change, like death and taxes, is inevitable and the community knows it. There is no desire for permanence; the church truly is people moving through life.

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THE LAITY

THAT OLD-TIME RELIGION

Bud Johnson

My grandfather was not an intellectual, but he liked to read. He was not a writer, but he liked to put things down. Though he died almost sixty years ago, he still speaks to me through the notebooks he left behind. They are like letters from a close relative in a distant land.

On Saturday, November 18, 1889, he sat in his one-room log schoolhouse in Hardin County, Kentucky, where planks served as desks while the blackboard was made of "old roughly dressed lumber," and wrote the words I read now: "Owing to unfavorable weather, have only attendance of three pupils. First snow of the season fell at about half-past eleven o' clock."

His full enrollment was fourteen—seven girls and seven boys—ranging in age from seven to eighteen. Their names are in his notebooks, together with samples of their penmanship. He was especially proud of seven-year-old Bertha Fowler who wrote in a large, firm hand: "The man has a hat. Bertha is my name."

His notebooks also register the frustrations of a teacher in those rural hills. A few years later he wrote at the beginning of a term: "There are but few persons in the district which take any interest at all in school affairs. A majority of the pupils can neither read nor write, while a large percent have never been at school. Indifference, indigent circumstances, and sickness all together are the reason for such a small enrollment at this time."

As his family grew, grandfather left teaching in 1895 and moved to Louisville where he took a job cleaning coaches for the Southern Railway. "Worked three months without missing a day," he tells me, " and was discharged by John Shelton, foreman, because of my Catholicity, Shelton being a member of

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THE LAITY

I'M OK, I'M OK... AREN'T I?

Brian Doyle

In late August, with subtle colors just beginning to show up in the trees outside my dusty window, I take stock of the year past. I grip my pencil with resolve and purpose, and start on the top of the page, on the left side.

● Age: Thirty-six. Not young, not old. Aristotle thought that thirty-five was the peak of a man's life; everything after that was a slide down the hill. Nothing to be done about it. I am camped out in mid-life, right on the continental divide. Soon all my water will flow to another sea. I think about the time left to me and I realize that time is without apt metaphor or simile. Time is not like anything. Time goes too fast, and children sprout like weeds, and the men and women I love decline and fall, also like weeds. Nothing to be done about it.

● Health: Overall, not bad. In the larger scheme of things I am ruddily healthy, neither thin nor fat, neither acrobatic nor decrepit. The mind works relatively smoothly. I had back surgery last year, I had back surgery this year, I'll have back surgery next year, probably. Maybe I should just plan on it every year, like Thanksgiving. Maybe I should have a special meal around the event. "Ah, Surgery Day," I'll think, and envision succulent salmon steaks and heaping mounds of peas, and nameless uncles sleeping off the meal in the parlor, with their vests half-buttoned and their cigars smoking themselves quietly, the columns of smoke rising in unbroken columns toward the ceiling.

● Hair: Hanging on with surprising strength. Some years ago

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(Macchiarola continued from page 9)

Over the same years, I have also observed and lived in Catholic parishes. Here the process of coming and going is not seen in the same challenging way. There is, after all, the church building, the school, the convent, the rectory to maintain. In thinking of the church, it is often these buildings that come to mind. The "physical" quality of this image is reinforced by the concept of parish boundaries, which are often also used to establish and describe membership—"I live in Saint Z...." The changing composition of a parish community is often seen as a sign of decline and decay. Old-timers pass away or move to suburbia and newcomers replace them, many of whom are not Catholic. These new residents are often seen as a loss for the community. The community pays little—or perhaps no—attention to the task of inviting them to join the church and participate in parish life.

Having seen this contrast between parish ministry and campus ministry, I believe there are some lessons to be drawn that would be useful to the parish and perhaps the future of the church. I do this from my perspective as the former head of a business organization, as a corporate director, and, until recently, a professor of business in two universities.

What most strikes me as the difference between parish and campus is "market strategy." On campus students are being challenged to find more meaningful ways to live. As a result, God seems to take on an important and changing meaning. In parish life the emphasis is on resisting change. Here the strategy is one of serving a community that is thought of as already in place and its future dependent on retaining the past rather than figuring out how to grow and welcome newcomers.

There is an elementary business principle at work here: a business that only serves the same customers is doomed. Companies that refuse to develop new markets cannot survive. The price of the company's products will rise with the inevitable rise in the cost of producing its product. This price increase will drive customers to more aggressive competitors. If a company is not seeking new markets, the quality of its product will be compromised. With standards relaxed, longtime customers—who have retained product loyalty—will look for a substitute. Thus a healthy business is always developing new customers and trying to improve the quality of its product.

At the same time, the faithful customer will remain with the company if the product, as improved, continues to offer the basic quality the customer is looking for and to which he or she is accustomed. The company's fidelity to the basic product, particularly when the product fills a real need, is a necessary part of a successful marketing strategy. The successful company has to search aggressively and constantly for new customers. The focus then has to be on how the company sells what it has to offer those who now need the product. Successful manufacturers of consumer products, such as paper diapers or of baby food, have come to understand that their market has to be broader than the young families currently purchasing diapers or baby food. Their customer base is constantly growing. And new potential customers need to be told that there is a company out there with a quality product they will want. As with the chaplain in charge of campus religious programs, so also in the parish: the reach of the good news, if you will, has to be aggressive and constant.

The campus minister and the baby food manufacturer know that the customers they "lose" have actually been "passing through"; they take the loss not as a sign of decline and decay, but as an opportunity to find new customers. When the company takes that reality seriously, it markets aggressively and pays a great deal of attention to advertising and communicating, often in many languages and through different means. In a sense, its goal is not unlike Jesus' instruction to the disciples, "teach all nations."

I do not mean to imply here that applying sound business principles to evangelization can deal with the intangibles; the strength of the Holy Spirit and the power of prayer are, for me, very real. From the standpoint of measuring the true efficacy of religious institutions, my analysis should be understood to be quite limited and at best incomplete. Notwithstanding that, it seems to me that parish life in its present form is in need of some significant overhaul and that marketing strategies might very well be helpful. In this regard two dynamic dimensions of campus ministry could be useful for reflecting on parish life: the process of change is constant; and lay members of the campus community often assume roles left in parishes to priests and parish staff.

Many parishes would not understand or accept this way of looking at their situation. For the most part this means that there are parishes using strategies that cannot work. Of course, there are parishes that are exceptions, but in the main, most parishes I know feel threatened by change.

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Take, for example, the matter of evangelization. American Catholics are hesitant to evangelize. In fact, Catholics take a certain satisfaction in appearing not to proselytize. Think of how many parishes in the inner-city boast of the great numbers of non-Catholics attending their school, yet many have a policy of not inviting parents to consider joining the church. This is like a car dealer boasting that while consumers may buy the competition's car, he services them at his repair shop. The real pride in Catholic inner-city schools, it seems to me, would come when the parents of students at these schools are

A Catholic in the cafeteria

Dinnertime in the college cafeteria. The sophomore was beaming at me across the Chicken Marengo."You know the thing I like best about Mass in the chapel?"

"No, what exactly?" I smiled in gracious anticipation. Spontaneous student confessions of enthusiasm for the liturgy always warmed my chaplain's heart. Not that I could take much credit for myself; I kept the simple lines of tradition uncluttered, or tried to. Visiting celebrants who adorned the Mass with ad-libbed prayers were subject to gentle rebuke. The Mass, as I often reminded the student liturgy committee, *had* to be a gift of the Holy Spirit. Left solely to our own devices, we humans could never have designed such a satisfying ritual.

"The best thing about Mass," she went on, "is how it's not really *Catholic*."

She said the word "Catholic" with a small moue of disgust, as if recalling an ancient aunt who didn't smell quite right.

I recovered my voice. "Well, what exactly do you mean by *Catholic*?"

Out poured the adjectives: "cold, remote, unfeeling, judgmental, rigid, exclusive"—a tissue of impressions, gathered layer by layer in the parish of her youth, hardened now into a carapace of disdain.

Hers was a familiar refrain. Beginning with my own college classmates, I had listened to changes rung on the same theme. (There were exceptions, to be sure—mostly Catholics who had grown up in the fabled dioceses of the Midwest, where, it was reported, things were "different.") Among those angered or disgusted or wearied by their home parish, many walked away from the church without a backward glance. Others stayed in, falling in love with the Body of Christ. Still others, like this sophomore, bloomed with enthusiasm, but were anchored to the church by fragile roots.

For the hyper-educated and for pastoral leaders (I qualify on both counts), it is easy and tempting to dismiss the complaints of teen-agers and college students. Put down one-third of their alienation to simple adolescent carping, another third to the reach of the prevailing culture and its current crop of idols (personal choice, disposable income, and the perfect body à la MTV), and the final third to ignorance. This last, being susceptible to remedy, ushers in the further temptation to educate: if only college-age Catholics could read (pick four out of six)—Merton, *Lumen gentium*, Flannery O'Connor, Teresa of Avila, Raymond Brown commentaries, or *Commonweal*. If only....

Education is an essential means of incorporating younger Catholics into the wider community of faith. But this effort will flounder, I'm afraid, if students aren't first incorporated into their own local churches.

Moreover, this is what they themselves desire. Yet, such a desire may often go undetected just because students tend not to possess a theological vocabulary. Those I know favor the swift, direct, concrete appeal. They remind me of the Galilean and Judean villagers following, from the margins of the road, Jesus' progress toward Jerusalem, lobbing their demands through the noise of the crowd, fended off by harried disciples.

If we could leave off feeling harried and train our attention on our younger brothers and sisters, what would we hear? Basic stuff. They want to walk into church on Sunday and be called by name. They want music good enough that songs become prayers. For themselves, or for their younger sisters, they want a chance to serve at the altar. They want to hear, now and then, a word addressed to their own particular fears and failings and moments of grace. They don't want to wait until they're fifty before they can serve as lectors or eucharistic ministers. They want to be invited; they want to be acknowledged; they want to be known.

They want, in short, to be part of the One Body of Christ. Their thirst for inclusion is a gift from the Holy Spirit for all the church. If the gift is awkward to receive, so be it. The impatience of younger Catholics can chafe, and their thoughtlessness can sting. Certainly that night in the cafeteria, I had a great desire to throttle my sophomore companion. Yet she gave me an invaluable gift, forcing me to recognize anew what Paul first saw two thousand years ago in Corinth: how thoroughly all our elaborate labors on behalf of grace are dependent on the simplest gestures of hospitality.

We can do better by the younger members of the church. If we invite them to take the choicest places at the table, we will secure a blessing for all God's people.

REGINA PLUNKETT DOWLING

Regina Plunkett Dowling is the former chaplain at Saint Joseph College in West Hartford, Connecticut. At present she is a Ph.D. candidate at Yale University.

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eagerly sought after—as sought after as the tuition—to join the church.

In campus ministry new markets are sought out and new needs satisfied. Youngsters turned off on religion are encouraged to rediscover the church. The roles of the members of the community reflect a broad set of tasks. And with membership constantly changing, tasks also change. The community's interests—catechesis, choir, shelters, home care, youth groups, food distribution, prayer groups, Scripture study—often reflect the interests and talents of particular members. The tasks often are not institutionalized, and "lay ministry" is broadly understood, for many of these tasks fall to the initiative and responsibility of the laity. When this happens in the traditional parish, it is usually seen as a kind of default: not enough priests on hand to do the job. In fact, some jobs cannot be done as well by the clergy. Several priests have mentioned to me their difficulty in convincingly delivering a spiritual message with credibility to people who know the limits of a priest's experience. When a lay person can say, as I have in pre-Cana discussions, that prayer has a substantial role in family life, it is more credible than when that message comes from someone in the "prayer business." Yet this is rarely understood.

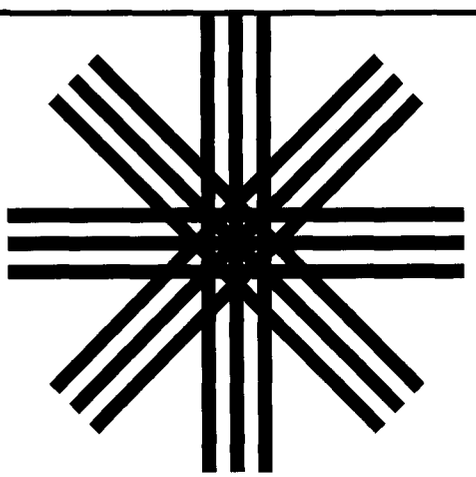
In addition to restricting the role of the laity, parishes often see their services primarily as product delivery on the part of the priest. But with fewer and fewer clergy, there are in some minds, fewer and fewer services to be had. This is a sure sign of a major problem. Since Vatican II, the church has said—though been slow to implement—that the services of the church are also delivered by the laity. This is not an invitation from on high, it is an essential part of the process of keeping the "product" alive. John Paul II speaks the same message in *Centesimus annus*: "Whereas at one time the decisive factor of production was the land and later capital—understood as a total complex of the instruments of production—today the decisive factor is increasingly man himself, that is, his knowledge, especially his scientific knowledge, his capacity for interrelated and compact organization as well as his ability to perceive the needs of others and to satisfy them."

John Paul sees enhanced human development as critical and warns that those unable to participate in society may be driven to a life of despair. "Many people...do not have the means which would enable them to take their place in an effective and humanly dignified way within a productive system in which work is truly central....They have no way of entering the network of knowledge and intercommunication which would enable them to see their qualities appreciated and utilized...." The pope is speaking of the economy and workers, but apply his words to the church and the laity. Unless the laity are challenged to participate in the church and to be part of a productive system where they have roles to fill, spiritual development will also "take place over their heads."

The role of delivering and receiving the services of the church is in the hands of the whole faith community. On college campuses where the reality of God's presence in the world and in the lives of the students has to be worked at constantly, the process is vital and energizing—and it is church. In fact, we are not truly church—regardless of our roles—if we are not working at these same tasks. We are not church if the meaning of church is a building; we are not members if we are not engaged in the work of the church. The pope himself writes, "the social message of the gospel must not be considered a theory, but above all else a basis and a motivation for action."

Our task, then, is to go beyond mere form in the parish. The lessons of successful campus ministry are clear: change is a good thing; we are all "passing through" and the parish needs to adopt that spirit. Openness to strangers, to newcomers, to those who must be invited to join with us is the way we spread the message of God. It is how we ought to be church. □

Frank Macchiarola is dean of the Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law, Yeshiva University. He served as chancellor of New York City's public schools from 1978 to 1983. This essay is based on a speech given at the Business Vocation Conference in Milwaukee.



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(Johnson continued from page 9)

the American Protective Association." This despite the fact that in all respects except for the "p," grandfather met the traditional requirements of a WASP.

He went on from cleaning coaches to selling encyclopedias, working in a shoe factory, keeping books for a general store, and repairing railroad cars. He then turned to carpentry and home building and finally became the proprietor of a small lumber company. Though economics drove him into the world of business, there was a part of him that remained in the schoolhouse. I can remember as a small child sitting on his lap in his old Morris chair, turning the pages of his unabridged Webster's and sounding out the words that went with the illustrations.

He was, I think, a kind of grassroots humanist, a man who combined his Catholicism with his interests in making things, reading, writing things down, raising a family, and actively following politics, although he never ran for office. His house was not distinguished by a gallery of religious pictures or statuary. His brand of Catholicism was better symbolized by the thick Douay Bible in the living room and the Fourth Degree Knights of Columbus sword in the bedroom. His notebooks attest to a militant pride in his faith in an environment that was predominately Protestant fundamentalist.

Let a Catholic student win a spelling or oratorial contest and the clipping was pasted in his book. He clipped an item that claimed parochial schools had saved the nation $290 million in 1931. "It makes no difference what the subject is," he wrote, "the Catholic boys and girls are always in the lead."

He was outraged by those who questioned the Americanism of Catholics. "With 41 percent of the navy and 35 percent of the army of the United States being of the Catholic belief," he wrote, "and 25 million Catholics loyal to their God and country, defending the Constitution and laws of their country, how can anyone accuse them of disloyalty?"

He collected items noting that eleven of the thirty presidents of the United States up to that time had been sworn in by Catholics, that the city of Washington had been laid out by a Catholic, and that a Catholic architect designed both the White House and the Capitol building.

Such concerns no doubt strike many Catholics today as provincial, but they are indicative of the defensive posture of Catholics in a time and place where they were still trying to prove they were good Americans. My parochial school history text made much of the fact that "the father of the American navy," one of Washington's leading generals, and a signer of the Declaration of Independence were all Catholics. Perhaps because of that I have never had a quarrel with the presentation of black history.

In 1928 the question of Catholic loyalties became a bitter issue with the nomination of Governor Alfred E. Smith as the Democratic presidential candidate. Grandfather's notebooks leave no doubt about his partisanship in the fray, beginning with his

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triumphant recording of Smith's first-ballot nomination in Houston. He refuted the attacks on Smith's affiliation with Tammany Hall. "If Smith is elected," he wrote, "this country is in no more danger from Tammany than it will be from any of the various Republican machines throughout the country."

Religious bigotry played a major part in the 1928 campaign in Kentucky, as it did in other parts of the South. It is not surprising that he wrote a short essay on "Prejudice," dated November 4, 1928. "The greatest example of prejudice is found on the religious question and particularly between Catholics and Protestants," he observed. "This is so general that it is a menace to the freedom of the country. It is almost unbelievable how great this prejudice is."

After the 1928 election, grandfather consoled himself by noting that Herbert Hoover, Calvin Coolidge, and Warren Harding were the only three presidential candidates in history to win more votes than Smith received in 1928.

Four years later he was amused by echoes from Hoover's losing campaign against Franklin D. Roosevelt: "Mr. Hoover said many things, such as times might have been much worse. Also, if I am not elected grass will grow in the streets. And if it had not been for me the U.S. would have given up the gold standard in two weeks.'"

After Roosevelt's election grandfather backed the New Deal. In his notebooks is the text of a speech he gave to a Holy Name Society hailing FDR's National Recovery Act as "the greatest law for the relief of unemployment and distress that has ever been passed in the United States." Grandfather urged his audience to patronize businesses that displayed the Blue Eagle, the NRA's symbol, but warned of dishonest use of the emblem. "The Blue Eagle will be displayed in many windows," he said, "where a black vulture lurks within the walls."

In that speech grandfather said people should buy American-made goods rather than cheap foreign products. He accused Japan of flooding the U.S. "with cheap, inferior electric lamp globes that sold for less than they could be made in this country, with the result that several American factories had to close, which threw many people out of work."

Grandfather died before Roosevelt completed his first term. His last notebook entry is dated November 1935, less than a month before his death. It was a prayer of thanksgiving "to a merciful God who has bestowed so many favors and blessings upon us."

When he filled his notebooks, did he realize he was writing to descendants like me to give us some idea of where we came from? Or was it simply a way to gather his thoughts in the midst of a busy life that had been diverted by economic necessity from the schoolhouse to the workaday world of the lumberyard?

In either case, I'm thankful that a common man of common sense took the time to build a bridge across the generations. Our lives are worlds apart, yet his past lives in my present, and his notes give me a better understanding of that part of me.

I only wish I could write back. I'd like to ask grandfather what he thinks of today's political scene where Catholics can vie for a presidential nomination without raising a religious storm. If an election ever came down to choosing between a Pat Buchanan and a Jerry Brown, which way would he vote?

Did he envision a day when Catholics can feel so remote from job discrimination that some can attack a civil rights law as a "quota bill"? Or a day when other Catholics look upon abortion as the only defining political issue? I'd like to tell him: "Well, grandfather, we don't have many one-room schools any more, and we have herds of school buses, but there are still lots of kids, as well as adults, who can't write as well as Bertha Fowler.

"And the gold standard has been gone for a long time but no one seems to miss it. Our former president said things like 'read my lips.' In your day I guess that was something said only to the hearing-impaired. As for the Japanese, no one today calls their products inferior."

I can see him shaking his head when I tell him that nowadays most ordinary people I know, people like lumber dealers, think talking or writing about politics is something better left to the professionals. □

Bud Johnson, a former editor and special assistant to the mayor of Milwaukee, is now a full-time free-lance writer.

Kit Thompson

For Jean MacDonald, b. 1910

Genealogy: they have a word for the science
of searching backwards for ourselves.
I mark annotations with ruler and pencil
lines like capillaries spider loose across the page.

Between generations, I water the plants.
The leaves curl in, like tongues, darkened.
I never see them fall, sweep them, later,
palm into palm and dream past the window-grate:

A house is being razed.
The family gone, the view is hollow:
painted squares of black
have sucked away a year of sun.

I think of falling leaves,
here and there, mothers and sons,
cousins and daughters,
a few from the outer branches.

The lines converge and disappear,
unprofessional stains appear:
wayward ashes
ancestors blown like heather

from the lowlands and moors to root again
clasping their own distances
as far from me
as the haunt of their keenings.

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(Doyle continued from page 9)

there was a brief flurry of activity on the flanks but the center has held firm. Encouraging.

● Beard: Status quo. I would like it to branch out, to strive for Melvillean and Whitmanesque proportions. It declines to do so, striving only to be a suitable beard for a rabbi. We maintain an uneasy alliance; it keeps growing sideways and I keep cutting it unevenly. Neither of us is quite on the ball here but there's time.

● Eyesight: Hopeless. Dimming fast. Nothing to be done except to praise the man or woman who invented spectacles. Many times I have thanked my stars that I wasn't born to a Sioux family 200 years ago. Everyone else would ride off to raid the neighbors or slay grizzly bears and there I would be, old Wood Eye, keeper of the fire coals.

● Nose: A major item, period. Nothing to be done. Have reached a truce over the years. I have promised to not let it be broken anymore, and it has not gotten any larger or lumpier for some years. Time has conferred upon it a size and dignity not unlike that of the Matterhorn.

● Wealth: Relativity is the word of the day here. There is no wealth to speak of, and yet my shoes are clean, my car hums, wine sparkles merrily on my table. I pay the bills on the first day of each month, rounding off numbers to my own detriment in my checkbook and carefully securing the bill envelopes with a large clip. I mail them together, giving them all an even chance to get where they must go. As I drop each in the mailbox I scrutinize the envelope to make sure that I have carefully printed my return address. After the bills are paid every month there is approximately $200 left over. In 1921, the year my father was born in Pittsburgh, his father earned less than that every month. He sold glass. For a year he had three children before the baby died. Her casket cost a lot of money.

● Love Life: To be loved with such humor and compassion is not what I expected. At age twenty-eight, after a truly egregious series of miserable misadventures with girlfriends, I retired from the field, taking up residence on a sandy island. Withdrawal and contemplation were in order. I flew kites and played chess and carefully noted the changing plumage of seabirds. In the spring I met a painter. Two years later we married; six years later she is feeding a delightful and energetic child named Lily. "I love you more than I can say," says my wife, in characteristically direct fashion. I don't believe any further comment is necessary. I keep an eternal eye on the weather of my love life. The weather is remarkable.

● Occupation: Editor, writer. Organizational skills, nil. Long-term planning skills, negligible. Am pleasant and amiable for the most part while at work, get most of my work done, fudge only under extreme duress, occasionally write a blinding sentence. Books published: none. Prospects of same dimming. Waters are flowing west. I am writing shorter and shorter pieces. I am glad of that, I say to myself; perhaps, after years of practice, I am writing only those words which should be written. Perhaps I am editing myself with subtle grace. But I think of James Joyce, finally reduced, or elevated, to writing only a couple of sentences a day. He would spend all day writing two sentences, emerging triumphantly at dusk to announce to his wife that he had written two superb sentences. Joyce's children went hungry a good deal and he spent many years teaching English lessons, a job he hated. On the other hand, he is famous and his books are devoured all over the world. Jury still out on this matter, I think. Maybe I should write a brief essay about it. I wonder a lot what James Joyce's wife said to him when he announced that he had written two good sentences that day. William Blake's wife used to serve him an empty plate at dinner, to remind him that they had no money. It is said that he smiled at her deft poetry.

● Reading: A happy and disheveled mess. No organizational principle whatsoever. The same day finds me reading cartoons, a mammoth poem by William Blake, an article about moles, an essay by Charles Lamb, the police log in the local newspaper, an impassioned defense of the spelling bee as competitive educational experience, a traffic survey, two pages of *Paradise Lost*, and the list of ingredients on the side of a cereal box. And that was just today; I hear the belly laugh of tomorrow in the distance. Here too, I don't believe anything can be done. How many times have I told myself to write down lists of prospective books, to order my reading with some purpose in mind, to observe at least the semblance of a pattern? Many times. But one thing leads to another. As soon as I finish reading this long essay about Quebec I will certainly buckle down and finish sickly old Marcel Proust, who is coughing in my study. Right after that I will certainly buckle further down and mop up those last few books I'd wanted to read before I finish that essay about Blake. But what do I find next to the magazine which contains the Quebec essay? A travel book containing a long essay about Toronto. Must read! Despair! Joy!

● Spiritual Life: In same state as reading life, I'm afraid. Joyous and disheveled. Flashes of discipline pop up here and there like walkways in a swamp but they are quickly overwhelmed by the mud. A puzzle. I have decided there is a god. Documentation on the matter is unavailable, but everyone has a pet theory. Religion is like management, a nebulous idea on which everyone is an expert. The easy road would be to avoid the question, but I have to be honest and face up to the fact that God is eminently probable.

● Sex Life: Excellent. No further comment at this time. This is a family magazine.

● Wisdom: Nebulous. Not much to be said about it by the subject of analysis lest he be accused of hubris. Commenting on your own wisdom is like giving yourself a nickname.

● Heirs: One, a girl. She is a small girl the size of a wood elf. To her I bequeath my precious live Springsteen tapes, my books, the copyrights to my published writings, and whatever car I possess at the time of my demise. If I own a house then I will bequeath it to her also. I will be sad to have to die, but even sadder is the fact that every year I love more people and I'm not positive that I'll see them after I die.

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I believe this covers the major points. Most parts of the body and mind are, considering the years of wear, performing with remarkable efficiency. The machine chugs along. The heart continues to grow more tender by the year and my memory is unaccountably expanding. I remember everything with increasing poignancy. I watch out for nostalgia, which tends to lend a saccharine taste to things, but this enormous expansion of emotional memory seems to be an honest, straightforward sort of boost. My childhood was pleasant but not bucolic, for example. My adolescence was a tad painful, my young manhood confused, and my adulthood a constant surprise. Here I am, in the middle of the highway, walking along the median strip, observing the vibrant weeds with interest. Things whiz by on both sides. I don't know where I am going or where the exit is but I find the median strip fascinating.

Will keep you posted. □

Brian Doyle is the editor of Portland Magazine, *published by the University of Portland, in Oregon.*

THE LAITY

(Steinfels continued from page 8)

servatives. Indeed, many of its reforms were heaven-shaking events. But much that the council decreed was not unfamiliar to American Catholics and in some places was already rooted in ordinary parish life, including participation in the liturgy, an active role for the laity, and a facility in dealing with the modern world reflected in American Catholic involvement in urban politics, unions, and national government.

But in 1993, thirty years after the council, this church is still in a state of transition. Only in part is this the result of the council; in other, larger part, it develops out of our own history. We are approaching the endpoint in a long transition away from an immigrant church centered on school and parish and deeply embedded in a religious culture shaped by the perspective of clergy and women religious. These gave the church definition, continuity, and well-trained personnel. Today, Catholics have everything those immigrant generations worked for—acceptance, assimilation, political power, social status, money, and clout—everything but a disciplined immigrant church and eager recruits for convents and rectories.

Today, American culture readily absorbs the grandchildren and great-grandchildren of those immigrant Catholics into the economic and social mainstream, making questions about Catholic identity pressing not only for individuals but for all of those institutions that have been essential links in the communal network. The prevailing individualism, the tempting congregationalism of American Protestant Christianity, and the pragmatic rationality of our economic and business systems are increasingly congenial to the mindset of American Catholics. All of these represent enticing alternatives to the communal, hierarchical, and sacramental understandings that lie at the heart of Catholicism. Were we more distant from the social deference of our immigrant forebearers, we would more easily see that the tensions we feel as American Catholics have as much to do with being American as with being Catholic.

American Catholics often forget that they are members of an ancient institution having finally to come to terms with modern democratic societies; ours in the U.S. is the most boisterous on a long waiting line. (For whatever else we might want to say about this church, it is noisy and impatient. American Catholics are 100 percent more likely to die of apoplexy than of boredom.) Around the globe, the church both adapts to and resists those forces of modernity that flowed from the Enlightenment and that inspired our nation's founding principles. Yet even as the church wrestles with those forces, they themselves are in flux.

In *The Consequences of Modernity* (Stanford, 1990), British sociologist Anthony Giddens identifies three qualities of modernity that are of particular interest here in that they present a challenge to the Catholic church, which in important respects retains a premodern outlook in its thinking and its structure. Those three qualities are discontinuity, disembeddedness, and reflexivity. The first two refer to the tendency of modern society to segment time and places so as to separate people from the past and from a locale, to separate them from the signs, symbols, history, and journey of their family, their people, their religious beliefs. The third characteristic, reflexivity, sums up a pattern of historical consciousness and critical thinking that represents a challenge not only to the "world" and our culture, but to the Catholic church and how it understands itself, its mission, its own definition of truth.

Reflexivity refers to the propensity of our knowledge to reflect back upon itself, leading, as Giddens says, to "the chronic revision of social practices in the light of [new] knowledge about those practices." The crisis this propensity raises for culture and religion stems from the realization that "the Enlightenment's promise of reason seemed to offer a greater degree of certitude than religious dogma"—certitude in medicine and science, in the systemization of government by bureaucracy and impersonal standards of performance, in the rationalization of social practices, such as marriage and divorce, child-bearing and child-rearing. Three centuries after the Enlightenment we have come to a point where our capacity to reflect upon and look back upon this long process "actually subverts reason, at any rate where reason is understood as the gaining of certain knowledge." The equation of knowledge with certitude has turned out to be misconceived. "We are abroad in a world which is thoroughly constituted through reflexively applied knowledge," Giddens says, "...[and] we can never be sure that any given element of that knowledge will not be revised" (*Modernity and Self-Identity,* Stanford, 1991). In this scheme of things, all knowledge is provisional.

One response of the church to this unsettling situation has been "ah ha—we told you so." At least one of the claims from leaders like Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, that the church is "countercultural," stems from their response to the challenges now faced by modernity: How do we know anything? How do we know whether or not it is true? What allegiance do we owe any

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set of facts or opinions, even the most expert?

To this situation of provisional knowledge and its handmaiden, relativism, conservative Catholics rejoin with claims of church authority that can definitively interpret Scripture and tradition, and with truths known, if not with the assurance of faith, yet with confidence in the application of "right reason" and a proper understanding of natural law to the data of experience. This is the epistemology that undergirds much of the teaching on sex and gender, artificial contraception, reproductive technologies, and prohibitions against the ordination of women. Sometimes, one suspects that men like Cardinal Ratzinger, perhaps large parts of the Vatican, and many conservative American Catholics think that this understanding of "truth" will some day make compelling sense to nonbelievers. Perhaps they actually believe that the Catholic church has soared above the pitfalls of modernity and can return now to rescue a world confronted by postmodern ambiguities and dilemmas.

But here we come upon the church's own dilemma. The ancient culture of Catholicism meets the culture of modernity, American version, and finds many Catholics among modernity's most knowing adherents. This was not dismaying to the authors of *Gaudium et spes*: "The church...travels the same journey as all humankind and shares the same earthly lot with the world: it is to be a leaven and, as it were, the soul of human society." That confidence seems to have been lost by many in the hierarchy today.

Many of the tensions and challenges within the U.S. Catholic church can be framed around questions about church structure and organization, church leadership, and Catholic identity, each of which is made more complex by three additional factors. (1) We are once again an immigrant church—Vietnamese, Eastern Europeans, Latin Americans—in a church still governed by the first immigrants, the white, largely European, long-settled population that continues to grapple with the inclusion of African-American and Hispanic-American Catholics. (2) There are the struggles of women for inclusion in decision making, governance, language, and metaphor, issues as complex as that of ordination. (3) There are the now chronic "political" factions, liberal, conservative, radical, traditionalist, that agitate all things Catholic.

Catholics are the heirs and heiresses of a long and rich tradition of spirituality, an enormous body of theological and philosophical knowledge, ways of thinking, modes of analysis, and a store of devotional and charitable practices along with a more recently articulated understanding of social justice. In the United States much of that tradition has been embodied and passed on through those institutions I have already described and whose variety and numbers are unprecedented in the church.

They were almost all founded by priests or sisters; and to a considerable degree even now are sustained by them. Even in this day of the laity, lay people continue to be diffident in creating and supporting needed networks and organizations. When they do, it is always surprising to watch how they must continue to struggle for the support and respect of other lay people. An ecclesial stamp of approval—along with the willingness to work long hours for low pay—still counts for a lot in the Catholic church. This means that the lay-run, independent groups almost always operate at the boundaries—extending the reach of the church's mission while testing the limits of its adaptability and tolerance. As with all frontier enterprises, the resources are spotty, the culture thin, and the pioneers, though earnest and energetic, oftentimes moving off in all directions.

At the same time, the rapidly dwindling numbers of priests, sisters, brothers brings with it the attenuation, the thinning out, of life at the center, especially of religious life in vowed communities, which means the disembedding, the loss of people and places that embodied particular charisms, fostered certain devotions and practices, and specialized in certain kinds of work. (The genius of high schools run by Jesuits, Christian Brothers, Ursulines, Benedictines, and many others lay in their high demand for learning, each distinctively expressed, and an equally serious commitment to religious formation. Their quality and distinctive emphases are in danger of being lost.) Even now, many religious communities are in the tentative process of relinquishing these institutions to lay people and sometimes to non-Catholics, all of whom will play a larger and larger role in carrying out the mission of a high school or hospital or university, but not always with the spirit or goals of the founders.

Hence the increasing worry: Two generations from now, will these institutions have a distinctive Catholic character? Will a Jesuit education really mean anything? No one has the answer—which raises the leadership question.

Though fading, clerical culture remains dominant in most diocesan and parochial settings. Can it authentically absorb lay ministers ready to make the church the locale for their full-time work? Or must there be a radically revised understanding of church leadership and pastoral ministry? Vatican II recovered a sense of the church as a whole people, the people of God, emphasizing a universal call to holiness, especially including the laity. The givens of the Catholic church—a hierarchical structure expressed in the links between bishops and pope, and between priests and bishops—were called into question, in part because this universal call to holiness undercuts the existing theologies of the priesthood and religious life. In more subtle ways, the emphasis on community erodes the church's understanding of itself as a hierarchical institution. Yet within the hierarchy, the practice of collegiality, embodied by Vatican II and endorsed by it, has been subjected to narrow limits by Rome; nor have bishops and their priests found an adequate expression for their collegiality. As for the laity, very few mechanisms for granting responsibility or asking for their accountability are yet in place thirty years after the council.

Why?

There are issues of authority and autonomy. The Catholic educational system has turned out a lot of smart, skilled, and talented people. Like all their compatriots, American Catholics question authority, regarding all institutions with skepticism,

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sometimes contempt. When authority is found to be abused, when it is judged capricious or unreasonable, the kind of deference that Americans once granted their political leaders, and Catholic laity once granted clergy and bishops, is seen to be depleted. People talk back. Sometimes they're right and sometimes they're wrong. Unfortunately the church hasn't yet worked out good ways to have the kind of conversations and debates that would lead to useful resolution.

What is clearly in evidence thirty years after the council is that the theology that says Catholics must all be responsible for doing the work of the church has not been institutionalized. Lay people can be highly skilled in areas where the church could use them. But all institutions, including the church, have their own way of dealing with, or avoiding, problems. All institutional insiders are sensitive to outsiders watching them do their job—or worse, failing to do it.

Church officials are no exception to these rules. The two-way communications that might make for productive collaboration has not been institutionalized. There are no effective and respected consultative bodies at the national or the diocesan level that would allow the laity to see and understand the institution and its constraints and that would allow bishops and clergy to see how the knowledge, perspective, and skills of the laity could contribute to the well-being of the church. Parish councils, which can be effective instruments for parish planning and governance, emerge under one pastor only to be dismantled by the next. Is it any wonder that many lay people, though believing Catholics and faithful church-goers, want no part of institutional responsibilities? Or that politicians, business people, and academics hedge their "personal" religious beliefs behind a false division between private and public life?

Unfortunately, theological knowledge and the religious skills of lay people are not always on a par with their professional knowledge and skills. The most basic religious literacy seems on a decline, and younger Catholics seem to know even less about the facts of their faith as well as the intangibles of spirit and practice. Yet, this is a church with a knowledge base and with a brain; this makes it hard for people who are spiritually unformed and theologically undereducated to collaborate. Are these our future leaders?

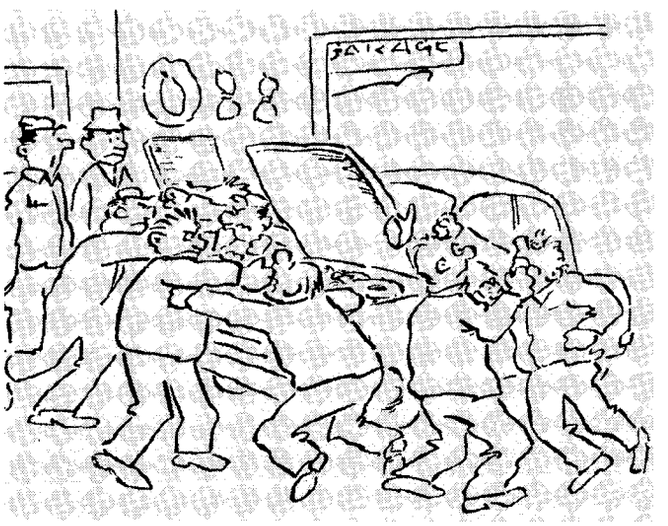
This is a church on the brink of a leadership crisis, a crisis that not only threatens to close institutions and to weaken structures, but, were it fully fathomed, a crisis that threatens the maintenance of Catholic identity, the very stuff by which we understand who we are, why we're here, and what we're doing—the identity question.

Identity is a set of characteristics by which a thing or a group is definitively recognizable or known. Identity can have psychological, sociological, political, and ethnic expression. The most comprehensive understanding of "Catholic" identity would add all of these expressions to the primary religious markers. We all need signs and symbols, supports and props, links and connectors to remind us of who we are. Some are represented by particular people or offices, some are located in particular places. Many of these symbols, signs, people, and places are passing from the life of the American Catholic church.

The sense that tradition is being deconstructed, that shared beliefs and common practices are being lost, is being experienced in the larger culture as well. So it is no surprise that this identity question is raised in Catholic quarters, but it is being raised with a special poignancy for us—and right now—because the continuing loss of our traditional leaders and "culture bearers" goes on without apparent efforts to stem the tide or to study, plan for, and institutionalize alternatives. Renewing, re-enforcing, and maintaining Catholic identity requires a reappropriation, an adaptation of the Catholic tradition.

This question of traditions and of the *Invention of Tradition* (the title of a book by the historian Eric Hobsbawm) is a complex matter. It calls for a level of conscious and conscientious creation on matters connected to people's deepest beliefs and unvoiced attachments: in the Catholic case, to religious beliefs and practices; in Hobsbawm's to the newly democratizing countries of nineteenth-century Europe. He describes that challenge as "the unprecedented problems of how to maintain or even establish the obedience, loyalty, and cooperation of its subjects or members, or its own legitimacy.... New modes of authority require new signs and symbols of attachment." The Catholic church is in the midst of such a task, not of creating new signs and symbols, but of renewing the signs and symbols we have; not of overthrowing authority, but of reimagining how it is to be exercised.

Not so long ago, nuns and priests embodied in their lives and their work the content of Catholic identity, and lay Catholics had little real responsibility for such a task. But even when lay people have tried to exercise responsibility, who has taken us seriously enough to hold us accountable? Now these responsibilities will fall increasingly upon us, but without a clear program of how to act intelligently or knowledgeably or faithfully, and at a time when there is a high level of anti-institutionalism and an irreligious spirit in our culture and a strong whiff of anticlericalism in the church.



"There seems to be some disagreement as to what's wrong with your car."

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Certainly by the measure of most opinion polls, Americans are religious, but not in a communally or institutionally embedded way. The personal and private character of the individual believer's faith tends to marginalize religion in the public arena and not primarily because of the separation of church and state. More than that, all religious groups must contend with the common denominator of popular culture, the temptation of material well-being, and a cultural insistence on individual rights rather than community responsibility. All of this encourages a tendency already at play in some religious groups to understand religion primarily as a personal choice of values and feelings. Of course, moral values and emotional expression are important aspects of religious belief, but there is more. There is religious knowledge; there is reflection upon that knowledge in light of a faith tradition; and there is action and service that should flow from that reflection. There is prayer, worship, and ascetical practices. All of this presupposes a community and a history, a theological and social context for individual faith.

In our own case, we know Catholicism is not simply a theory or a body of knowledge or a network of institutions. It is a way of life. It is not only a sociological phenomenon but a spiritual one. It is not simply about the maintenance of institutions, but about the conversion of hearts. For Catholics, the heart of the matter is not finally institutions or behavior, but gathering each Sunday to do what Jesus did, and ordering our lives to live his example.

It is not yet obvious how or whether lay people can act responsibly on behalf of the church. Or whether we can act in a way that honors and reflects the multigenerational and multicultural nature of American Catholicism. These internal problems are steadily exacerbated by resistance from Rome and a growing paralysis among our bishops. Add to this the limitless capacity of American culture to absorb Catholics and to reshape their religious sensibilities and moral imagination. American Catholics are in need of a countercultural stance. It is not the one Vatican conservatives are proposing, but neither are the pioneers at the frontier necessarily pointing in the right direction.

How will any of this get done? A fair question, one I confess that I am not sure how to answer. If there is an answer, it is a far longer and more complex than there is room for here. But provisionally, let me suggest the following. If the U.S. church opts for Rome's view of modernity while discounting modernity's challenge—internally and externally—bishops and priests will be increasingly paralyzed, intellectually and spiritually; literally unable, we might say, to hear the voice of the people and to read the signs of the time. In some practical and pastoral sense, they will become irrelevant, answering questions that no one is asking, performing acts that no one understands.

In that case, the actual task of maintaining Catholic identity and salvaging a Catholic community will fall to lay people, even though they remain second-class citizens in the church and far removed from the sources of power and influence. Those lay people willing to take a lead in what will be a thankless and frustrating task—at least, in this world's terms—will have to develop an understanding of the church more fully grounded in its tradition and more open to its mission. The partial view of life on the frontier and at the margins must give way to something larger, and more catholic.

American lay Catholics have finally to grow up and assume their responsibilities. The most active lay people have become complicit in a kind of division of labor, agitating for change in the church while leaving the job of maintaining continuity and personal and institutional identity to clergy and bishops. Yet every passing year makes it more unlikely that priests and bishops can carry out the assignment to the extent required. This situation requires greater cooperation and collaboration on the part of both sides; but lay people cannot become mere deputies. They must show more initiative and creativity in addressing issues of Catholic identity in the universities, hospitals, and social service agencies where they do their work. In civic and public life, Catholics should speak more freely and with candor of and from their religious tradition. Finally, the false divisions between lay people who "work for the church" and those who "work in the world" must be seen for what they are—false divisions.

Adult formation and education needs to be tackled in a planned and systematic way; we do not need more formal degree programs in theology, but parish-based groups, courses, circles, that will make ordinary lay Catholics more theologically and religiously literate; more adept at attending to the spiritual needs of themselves, their families, and their fellow Catholics through prayer and service, through Scripture and spiritual reading.

We will have to make passing on the faith to our children and children's children a more passionate undertaking more systematically carried out.

Social action groups that flourished in the 1950s and '60s (the Christian Family Movement, Young Christian Students, Young Christian Workers, Catholic Interracial Councils) need to be resurrected and renovated; the spiritual and charismatic movements of the 1970s and '80s (prayer breakfasts, faith and work groups, the cursillo, Marriage Encounter) need to expand their reach; and community and political organizing (flourishing in many Hispanic areas and inner city parishes) need to draw middle-class, white, suburban families and urban, yuppy Catholics into a broad-based struggle for social justice.

Just this catalog of organizations and efforts suggests how in local and piecemeal ways some of this work is being done and how much more of it could be tackled. But it needs a more conscious and conscientious development by lay Catholics willing to stand at the center rather than the peripheries, doing the work of the church both within and outside its enclosures while shunning the anger and easy frustration that comes from bureaucratic powerlessness.

I look at *Commonweal*, at *NCR*—in fact, both *NCR*s. I think of Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker. No one gave permission and no one asked; the work was started and it has continued. □

Margaret O'Brien Steinfels is the editor of Commonweal.

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THE LAITY

DEVOTIONAL CATHOLICISM HITS THE ROCKS

Dennis O'Brien

THE EDUCATION OF AN AMERICAN CATHOLIC
Paul Q. Beeching
Thomas More Press, $21.95, 405 pp.

Anyone seriously interested in the fate of the Roman Catholic church would profit from reading Paul Beeching's sad account of how he lost the faith of Holy Angels (his grammar school). It is, of course, an individual journey toward disillusion, but at least in the case of this reader, the pathway is familiar indeed. Beeching and I are about the same age, we grew up in Gary and Chicago respectively, underwent early education in "devotional Catholicism," and both recall Luke Appling's talent for hitting foul balls.

The "devotional Catholicism" of the prewar, pre-Vatican II church seems to Beeching (and to myself when the wind is brisk) somewhere between daffy and disastrous. Beeching has a particular fix on Saint Blaise and wonders how many modern Catholics congregate to ward off catarrh with crossed candles. Perhaps the most telling anecdote in the book is Beeching at age twelve or so asking his mother if she had noticed what the prayers at the Sorrowful Mother Novena actually said: "I mean they keep talking about how you have never ceased to offend God and how you should be thankful he has not annihilated you already. Do you believe that?"

"Of course not...that's just a prayer. Now where did we leave the car?"

Beeching's title is a deliberate echo of *The Education of Henry Adams*. In his own modest way, Beeching compares his Catholic loss of faith to the loss of Protestant conviction experienced by Adams. Where Adams fancies the Virgin Mother as counter to the mechanical "dynamo" of the present world, Beeching is clear that the dynamo won out and he cannot settle for an aesthetic romance with the Lady of Chartres.

Beeching is no literary stylist or profound spiritual writer, but he has an awkward candor which needs to be fairly considered. This is a plain, unvarnished tale which speaks straightforwardly about the bizarre quality of so much traditional devotional life and the arguments (from pulpit to textbook Thomism) which were used to defend it. I expect that there are many Catholics (or ex-) of our generation whose spiritual journey has descended along the same slippery slope—and if they haven't reached the same denials, they should certainly ask why not.

For all his criticisms, often bitter, Beeching is not Christopher Durang malignantly skewering Sister Mary Ignatius. He confesses a deep nostalgia for the traditional church and suggests that *if* he were to be a believer in 1993, he would be with Cardinal Ratzinger. What he appreciates in Ratzinger is the cardinal's insistence on "the supernatural." It is the loss of any belief in the supernatural which Beeching develops as the central theme of his own "loss of faith" and which, he insists, is the central reality (and problem) for the post-Vatican II church.

Beeching senses loss of the supernatural on a broad scale: not just odd devotions to dubious saints, but the whole main story of Christian life. His own rejection of the supernatural stems from two sources. Although a professor of English literature, he studied more than enough philosophy, post-the-Jesuits at Saint Louis University, to accept the basic skepticism of David Hume and the logical positivists. Perhaps more important than his own philosophical predilection, however, is his clear perception that the average Catholic of the day gives not a thought to the supernatural. He quotes Rahner: "How many still have, deep in their hearts, the Christian fear of death and the last judgment? How many are capable of feeling desperately worried...when some Catholic acquaintance of theirs dies without the last sacraments?"

(Continued on page 24)

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September 1, 1993

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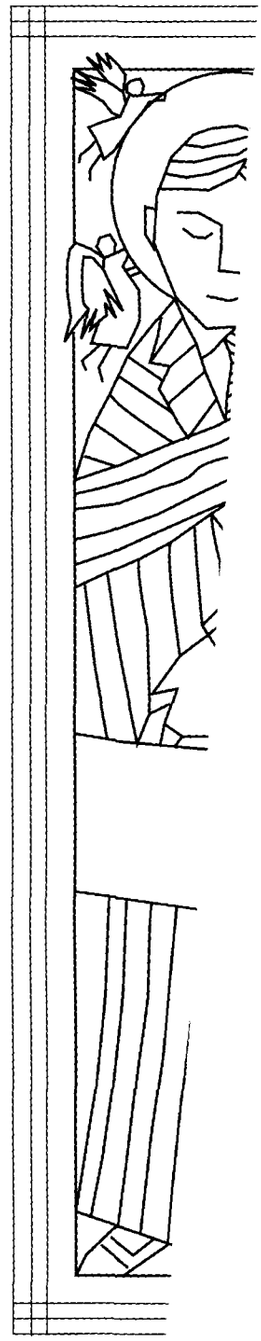

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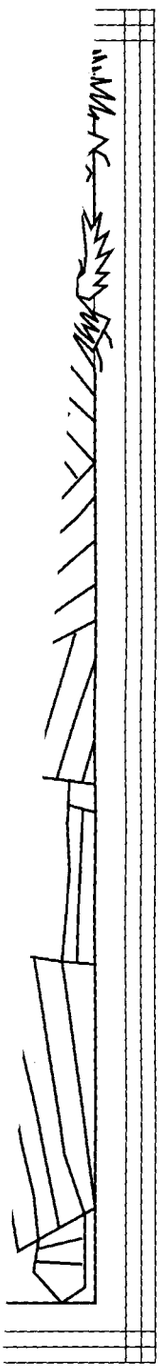

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Sincerely,

Giacomo Panettiere

Giacomo Panettiere, President

□

ADRIAN J. REIMERS, *a.k.a. Giacomo Panettiere, is a philosopher and free-lance writer. He lives in South Bend, Indiana, "with my wife and three of our four children, none of whom do I want interviewed should my own cause come before the Congregation for the Causes of Saints."*

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Beeching thinks that Rahner certainly didn't worry about such matters. (He regards Rahner as "an extreme example of minimalism"—not in the same universe with Holy Angels!) Worse yet, Beeching charges that the Fathers of Vatican II abandoned the supernatural. "As the bishops discussed the details of the church's pilgrimage, they seemed to see it primarily as a horizontal mission of material salvation understandable to all creeds, the kingdom of the here and now."

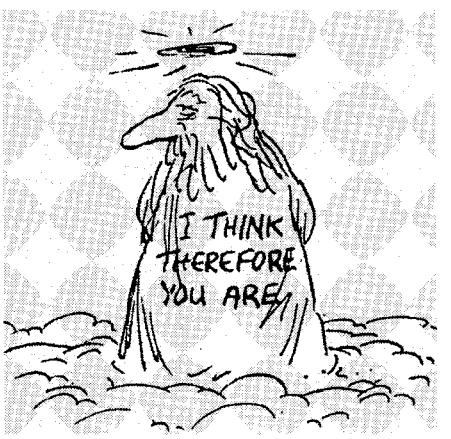
What Beeching regards as loss of the supernatural (at least as devotional Catholicism would have it) is, I believe, altogether common. What makes Beeching so compelling is his valiant try to be *honest* about the loss. He has read widely in a variety of revisionist theologians and biblical scholars—most of whom he sees as the successors of early twentieth-century Catholic Modernists. He often finds himself agreeing with their conclusions. (He ended his teaching career happily teaching the New Testament as the hodgepodge of texts and traditions it represents.) What Beeching cannot accept is that these minimal/critical conclusions have much at all to do with the Great Church. Thus he says of Thomas Merton: "By the end he had accepted so much of the new theology that only a thin affirmation of a God in Nature and a reverence for tradition kept him in the church."

I think Beeching is substantially correct in locating the problem of the post-Vatican II church somewhere in the region of the "supernatural." Modern church sermons can certainly be earnest in pursuit of social justice—but what do all those odd New Testament stories have to do with South America? Can't I have my good works without fantastic faiths?

I do not finally agree with Beeching's conclusion about the content of the new theology, but I do agree that it is often so buried in phenomenologese or overwhelmed with footnotes to all the Fathers, that the plain conclusion is substantially (and discreetly?) obscured. Beeching much admires Dietrich Bonhoeffer whom he sees as the prophet of "the death of God." Personally, I have always cherished Bonhoeffer's comment about his experience at Union Theological Seminary. He said the great lesson of his year in America was "that God had not revealed himself solely to German theologians." Beeching's text draws an American-style "bottom line" to what might well be gathered from some of the new theologies.

Is Beeching correct about the loss of public interest in the supernatural? It seems to me that a taste for something supernatural (or at least nonnatural) is everywhere in evidence. Rahner is probably correct about the Last Judgment, but what are we to make of the cult of the rock band the Grateful Dead? Rudolph Otto defined "the holy" as *mysterium, tremendum, et fascinans*. Maybe Beeching should have attended more rock concerts and read less Rahner. The BVM may no longer be mysterious, tremendous, and fascinating, but MTV certainly is to lots of hearty youth. Pick your own Madonna.

From the standpoint of David Hume,



rock and religion are equally suspect. (Hume favored "the calm passions.") While I admire Beeching's assiduous pursuit of philosophy, his allegiance to logical positivism seems to me only slightly less out of date than adherence to traditional Thomism. Modern "analytic" philosophy (post-Wittgenstein), while hardly enthralled with theological issues, is at least more broad-minded about the many, varied, and often peculiar uses of language. Maybe even the language of prayer.

Is there a sober theory for the supernatural? I hope so, because I agree with Beeching and Ratzinger that it is the *crux* of the church. At the same time, I have no immediate sympathy for the supernatural of the curator of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith—or the Grateful Dead for that matter. Those supernaturals seem all too often not super-natural but just plain strange.

This is no place to attempt a full discussion of the supernatural, but it does seem to me that beings who write autobiographies somehow fall out of the merely natural set of categories. Beeching faithfully records his first taste of Kool-Aid. In the great impersonal machinery of Nature, who cares? Only when Kool-Aid is transubstantiated into the person of Paul Q. Beeching in this act of memory is it of any significance.

I am quite convinced that any attempt to redescribe human experience in naturalistic categories is impossible. The problem is choosing the category for the "other-than-natural." Demurely, one may point to *homo faber* and suggest that it is in human artifice that humanity springs off of nature for good or ill. Flamboyantly, one may assert that human beings are "absurd." We are a sort of cosmic joke or disaster, beings whose loves and hopes exceed what nature would prudently constrain. Or, of course, one may think that these very loves and hopes reveal something super-natural about human history. The fault of so-called devotional Catholicism is that on its face (or with the passage of time and culture) it is disconnected from the deep currents of human life, creating a kind of extrinsic, supernatural "game" of indulgences and devotions.

Beeching's main story is disillusion with the church. There is a parallel text which is worth mentioning: an almost equal disillusion with his chosen academic profession. For a time he had hoped that a Newmanesque pursuit of "liberal education" would offer substitute salvation. He has concluded that no one—including most of his fellow faculty—had any more real interest in the great tradition than modern man has in the Great Church.

This disillusion with academia may be related to his problem of faith. Coming to religion from academic theology or antitheology (Thomist, Postivist, Modernist, etc.) is a likely loser from the start. One of the sins fostered by Beeching's brand of Catholicism is casting faith as a set of true propositions which could be proved by the literal historicity of the Bible or Thomistic deductions. The *Baltimore*

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Catechism and Q.E.D.! That sort of faith is a supernatural add on to natural science. But faith is not a "spiritual science."

In physics the more facts we know about atoms, the better; so in devotional Catholicism: the more truths you accept, the better. "Minimal Catholicism" as Beeching regards it is not so much a drastic reduction in the number of truths held to the vanishing point—it is an attempt to recapture the core structure of belief in sin and salvation. Rahner's effort is not a reduction of faith facts to a minimum; it is making sure that we understand the "grammar of faith" before we utter its "truths." (A point I tried to make in my review of *The Catechism of the Catholic Faith* in *Commonweal*, May 7, 1993.)

I have said that Beeching has the great virtue of attempted honesty. But the trouble is knowing how to be honest about either faith or un-faith. Beeching worries about a revisionist church following him in his unbelief like "the hound of heaven." "I couldn't even defect properly." He concludes that one may need "a grace for disbelief." Amen. □

THEY ALL SHOW UP FOR MASS

John B. Breslin

COLLEGE CATHOLICS: A New Counter-Culture
Michael J. Hunt, C.S.P.
Paulist Press, $9.95, 172 pp.

In *Commonweal*'s education issue of April 9, 1993, Kenneth Woodward and Michael Hunt offered contrasting views on the state of Catholic students in higher education. Woodward focused on Catholic schools and lamented the general decline of liberal arts education, as well as the specific failure of Catholic colleges and universities to convey to their students the intellectual depth and breadth of Catholic high culture. Hunt took off from the annual UCLA survey of college freshmen and found in it a confutation of the popular notion that secularism or religious indifference is the regnant attitude among students on college campuses: more than three-fifths of the respondents described themselves as either Roman Catholics (30.5 percent) or born-again Christians (31.7 percent). These are contrasting views, but not contradictory ones, since Woodward's complaint is not with the "raw material" but with the end "product" of Catholic colleges. Indeed, Hunt's final point about a college-aged audience receptive rather than hostile to a religious message raises the stakes both for Catholic higher education and for Newman chaplains, like Hunt himself, at secular universities.

Based on eighteen years' experience at three such secular campuses, most recently at Tufts, Michael Hunt has written his own largely anecdotal account of religion on campus, and, like his reading of the UCLA survey, it is generally upbeat on the subject, especially where Catholics are concerned. The central image of the

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Alexander F. C. Webster
Foreword by George Huntston Williams

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book is a chapel filled on a Sunday night with several hundred students coming on their own to participate at Mass. What percentage of the Catholic population at Tufts this represents is not indicated, but it does make up, as a non-Catholic colleague comments to Hunt, "the largest voluntary, not-for-credit gathering of students that takes place on a regular basis."

Hunt sees the Mass as central not only theologically but also psychologically and even sociologically to Catholic identity, and he gets this from the students themselves. As one woman tells him, stopping "being" a Catholic for her meant stopping going to Mass on a regular basis. Surely, there's more to it than that, and Hunt methodically covers all the other bases (social justice, sexual morality, personal spirituality, etc.), but common worship remains a touchstone for his ministry, as it does for parish life.

Indeed, one of the several useful suggestions he makes to his fellow campus ministers is to use the parish as a frame of reference, not in a mechanical way but as a reality check on a ministry that can otherwise become rarified and precious. College students live in a four-year bubble that can inhibit as well as promote their maturing: good liturgies, retreats, and spiritual counseling can channel their inevitable introspection toward contemplation that establishes a personal relationship with God, but they need as well to hear the gospel's challenge to change the world beyond themselves, the larger world of business and politics they're presumably preparing to enter. That world includes parishes very different from college chaplaincies. Wisely, Hunt insists on a two-way conversation: graduates need to make an effort to find and join vital parish communities, but parishes need to adapt as well if they want to draw the thousands of enthusiastic young adults for whom their college years have indeed been formative of their Catholic faith.

The refreshing realism of that suggestion pervades the rest of the book. Just as Hunt resists the prevailing wisdom that college students are confirmed secularists, he warns against the temptation to accept rather than challenge the current *zeitgeist* on campus. Students are looking for adult role models, not overaged adolescents; and many of them come bearing the wounds of a society that has forced them to "grow up" far more rapidly than earlier generations: broken homes, addictions, promiscuity, phony sophistication. Combine that with a multibillion-dollar youth culture and you get a generation often wary of making life decisions and commitments. Ministering to them effectively requires the same virtues as good parenting: attentiveness, patience, and good judgment. Reading the many stories in Michael Hunt's book and meeting a couple of students who have worked with him lead me to suspect that he possesses those virtues and that the Catholic students who became involved in the Newman Center at Tufts are onto a good thing.

But that leaves open the question about the Catholics at Tufts and elsewhere who don't get involved as well as the even larger group who attend Catholic colleges and whose fate Ken Woodward lamented. What of the latter? Well, first of all, the Catholic college's responsibility for its Catholic students goes far beyond that of a Newman chaplain's; in addition to providing a campus ministry program which often includes resident chaplains, the college (or university) provides the framework for the students' whole experience on campus: from admission to curriculum, from student life to volunteer work.

Is Catholic intellectual life alive and well on such campuses in the way Woodward recalls from Notre Dame in the fifties? Based on a dozen years at Georgetown and some secondhand knowledge of other (mainly Jesuit) schools, I'd say that the general level of academic life is probably more sophisticated (less parochial, more rigorous), and that there is a growing interest among some students and faculty for a Catholic Studies program as part of the curriculum. The latter represents in part an admission that faculty are being hired for their specialized knowledge rather than their faith commitment, but also a realization that faculty members, not always Catholics, are teaching courses in the social and hard sciences as well as the humanities that deal with Catholic themes and issues.

Consolidating such efforts will provide not only a coherent intellectual discipline for the student but a forum for faculty interested in the rich Catholic tradition to share ideas. Similarly, a summer program called Collegium for advanced graduate students and young faculty with similarly Catholic interests had its first session at Fairfield University this past June.

There's no going back to the fifties, but a revival of interest in the Catholic intellectual tradition is underway. It needs much more nurturing within and beyond the classroom on Catholic campuses, as well as within and beyond the chapel at secular universities. It also needs gadflies like Ken Woodward and pastors like Michael Hunt. □

WHO DOES THE CHURCH'S WORK?

Dennis M. Doyle

MINISTRY: Lay Ministry in the Roman Catholic Church
Kenan B. Osborne, O.F.M.
Paulist Press, $29.95, 722 pp.

Some of my graduate students, most of whom are training for lay ministries, have felt confused and depressed upon reading John Paul II's *Christifideles laici* (1989). The pope stresses that the special mission of lay people is not in the church but in the world. He cautions against lay people becoming too interested in inner church matters to the neglect of their involvements in family, work, and society. He warns also of the danger of "a 'clericalization' of the lay faithful and the risk of creating, in reality, an ecclesial structure of parallel service to that founded on the sacrament of orders." Lay people derive their mission in the world directly from Christ, but when they perform ministries within the church they are assisting the hierarchy in a sphere that is not properly their own. A number of my graduate students (though certainly not all) feel that the pope is pulling the rug out from under them.

In *Ministry*, Kenan Osborne offers an

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alternative vision. He sees the justification for in-church lay ministry as flowing directly from one's life as a Christian; it is not something that needs to be derived secondarily through the hierarchy. Osborne holds that any false dichotomization between clergy and laity represents both an overly selective reading of Vatican II and a misreading of the New Testament on the crucial topic of discipleship. Osborne uses his own reading of the New Testament and Vatican II to help Catholics reconfigure their understanding of the interrelationship of clergy and laity. Catholics share first a common humanity and a common Christian discipleship; only when that context is well established can they begin to think about distinctions in role or rank.

Stressing commonalities before distinctions is not in itself a new idea; Osborne's contribution lies in the extraordinary range and depth that he brings to bear on this topic through his synthesis of Scripture, tradition, and Vatican II. He displays a remarkable grasp of the history of Christian ministry and reform movements as he traces the dissolution and reemergence of lay discipleship against the background of the rise of clericalism. Osborne demonstrates how the first Christian millennium witnessed the gradual but scandalous loss of lay status. By the year 1000, lay people were regarded as simply the passive recipients of the hierarchy's powers. The various Protestant reformations, the American and French revolutions, Vatican II, Christian feminism, and African and Latin American liberation movements all represent attempts during our millennium to reestablish lay power. In Osborne's opinion, some current official positions regarding laity, women, and ministry are impeding this development.

This is an important book, one that can find a place alongside Edward Schillebeeckx's *The Church with a Human Face*, Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza's *In Memory of Her*, and Leondardo Boff's *Church: Charism and Power* as groundbreaking scholarship that will contribute to the shaping of the church of the twenty-first century. For all of these associations, however, the book most reminds me of Hans Küng's *The Church*, published in the wake of Vatican II.

Osborne and Küng both offer mammoth works that interpret the council against the background of Scripture while reviewing the entire sweep of church history. Each strongly prefers Scripture to tradition; each seems to put little stock in the guidance of the Holy Spirit in developments that cannot be traced to the Scriptures; each derives the authoritative interpretation of Scripture more from contemporary scholarship than from an examination of how the Scriptures have been received; and finally, each declares confidently that many

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Session Two: July 11 – July 22

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Joseph Komonchak	Theology of Church
Claire Lowery	Theology and Pastoral Practice: Integrative Colloquium
Barbara Reid	Introduction to the New Testament
Jon Sobrino	Spirituality & Discipleship

REVIEWERS

DENNIS O'BRIEN *is president of the University of Rochester. He is the author of* God and the New Haven Railway *(Beacon).*

JOHN B. BRESLIN, S.J., *is university chaplain at Georgetown University, where he teaches twentieth-century Catholic fiction.*

DENNIS M. DOYLE, *who teaches ecclesiology at the University of Dayton, is the author of* The Church Emerging from Vatican II *(Twenty-Third Publications).*

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official positions, past and present, are based more on preserving power than on promoting discipleship. Behind each of these works, for all of their impressive scholarship, lurks an impassioned evangelical reformer who insists on dragging his Catholicism along with him.

Vatican documents operate with a different set of presuppositions concerning the relationship between Scripture, tradition, and authority. The Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith holds that the intentions of Jesus and the guidance of the Holy Spirit are reflected in many early developments that are not found in the Scriptures in a way that is accessible to modern scholarship. The CDF acknowledges that it is often placed in the position of defending its own authority, but that this is done not for authority's sake but for the sake of the gospel. Osborne consistently launches theologically competent challenges both to these presuppositions and to the conclusions to which they lead. I wish that he had done so in a manner that explored these stances more sympathetically, that anticipated the way that the Vatican would respond to his arguments, and that displayed more awareness of the tentativeness of his own sets of presuppositions.

Osborne might also have conceded more the merits of documents such as *Christifideles laici,* which, despite its flaws, will itself contribute positively to the shaping of the church in the twenty-first century. John Paul II's liberating insight, that life lived within the world can be a primary locus of Christian discipleship, is a point given insufficient attention by Osborne.

The theme that Osborne does emphasize, however, the full discipleship of all Christians within the church, is equally of great significance. I predict that my graduate students will love this book, being awed by its scholarship and empowered by its vision.

Above all else, the third-millennium Christian will return to the gospels again and again, seeking to establish in his or her personal and social life the very meaning of gospel discipleship. Only if and when he or she reflects Jesus, at whatever level in either the church or in society-at-large, will he or she truly live the gospel. □

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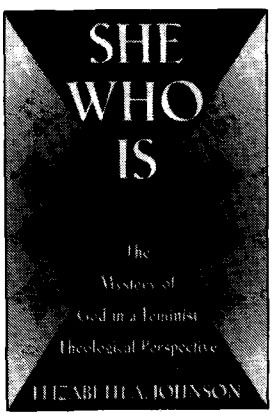

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CORRESPONDENCE

(Continued from page 2)

now, but in the light of our eternal destiny. That does not mean waiting for pie in the sky but rather realizing that the life of grace gives us the strength to dominate our passions. Failure to follow the encyclical has led to the mutual exploitation of men and women. The rising divorce rate attests to the isolation that accompanies the use of contraception: each can live his/her own life and only meet in bed when schedules overlap. Without vulnerability, spouses' paths diverge increasingly, and too often there is no reason to stay married. Outside marriage, contraception has led to an epidemic of sexually transmitted diseases, to single-parent pregnancies, and, too often, to abortion, which many regard as a primary contraceptive rather than a remedy for contraceptive failure.

The nonacceptance of *Humanae vitae* is rooted in the false premise that sex and procreation are intrinsically separable, and that such separation is a good. It is not good, because humans are contingent beings, and our happiness greatly depends on knowing how we were designed to work: "When everything else fails, read the directions."

The tragedy is that bishops and priests have failed miserably in disseminating the teachings of Paul VI and John Paul II, quite possibly from an unconscious male chauvinism. Proposing to place limits on intercourse ad lib for men appears to them to be worse than taking candy from a baby. Women, on the other hand, are to take all sorts of health risks so that they can be sexually available whenever the man feels a need.

If this appears to be a condemnation of Bishop Untener's position, it is. But if God can use Balaam's ass to get his message across, he may also use a woman gynecologist who has taught natural family planning for the past twenty years and who, as a consecrated religious, understands the Christian meaning of human sexuality.

HANNA KLAUS, M.D.

The writer is executive director of the Natural Family Planning Center of Washington, D.C.

Blind shepherds

Gaithersburg, Md.

To the Editors: The editors asked Bishop Kenneth Untener to comment on the "pastoral consequences" of *Humanae vitae.* This means how people have reacted to it. If we were to ask whether Untener accepts *HV*, we would have to say that he agrees with the people who do not accept it.

U wants to talk only in terms of people's perceptions. He admits most have never read *HV* although it is only eighteen pages long, written twenty-five years ago. How can people react responsibly to a document they have never read?

U maintains that dissenters have been treated badly by the magisterium. To the contrary! Who has been lionized by the secular media since 1968, the magisterium or dissenting theologians? Whose positions have been taught in seminaries, marriage preparation courses, most moral

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theology texts, public presentations at Catholic colleges and universities?

If *HV* is not taught in the schools, seminaries, adult education and marriage preparation courses, from the pulpit, or in diocesan newspapers, should we be surprised if the people do not understand it? If equal space and time are not afforded to assenters in answering objections, should we be surprised if confusion prevails?

Obviously U does not think *HV* can be defended or presented as intellectually appealing. "In the eyes of many people the teaching church has committed a teacher's cardinal sin: it has become more concerned about itself than about truth." So U presumes that *HV* is not a matter of moral truth, but merely a matter of loyalty to an institution, a whimsical act of voluntarism on the part of recent popes.

U uses cartography as his preferred analogy to explain American Catholics' rejection of *HV*. The terrain (reality) has not changed, but maps change, reflecting greater knowledge, cumulative experience, insights, precisions. U assumes, agreeing with dissenters, that the arguments of the "majority report" are valid, that anyone who agrees with *HV* is dishonest or lacking intelligence, and is probably a sycophant. U cannot understand how our "best and brightest and holiest" can believe that *HV* is true. For him the whole issue is reduced to church authority.

Where has U been all these twenty-five years? Has he read John Noonan's *Contraception*; Janet Smith's *Humanae Vitae: A Generation Later*; Kevin McMahon's *Sexuality: Theological Voices*; Lawler, Boyle, and May's *Catholic Sexual Ethics*; Ford, Grisez, Boyle, Finnis, and May's *The Teaching of HV: A Defense*; John Kippley's *Sex and the Marriage Covenant*? If so, how can he claim there is no depth of consistent reasoning here? Has he read *Casti connubii*, *Familiaris consortio*, *Humana persona*, John Paul II's *Love and Responsibility*, *Acting Person*, *Original Unity of Man and Woman*, *Blessed Are the Pure of Heart*? If so, how can he claim there has been no real development in our understanding of the terrain/reality of the Catholic sexual ethic?

The analogy preferred by U has another dimension. When in strange territory we place our trust in the wisdom and knowledge of the mapmaker and tour guide. They are supposed to have more experience. Now, the bishops are the moral guides and spiritual leaders of a diocese. If there is confusion in their minds about God's moral truth as it pertains to marriage, family life, and human sexuality, then of what use are they to their flock? Then we have the blind leading the blind.

MATTHEW HABIGER, O.S.B.

The writer is executive director of Human Life International.

The author replies:

I wrote on the perceived effects of *Humanae vitae* and I called for more open and honest discussion. These letters take up the call and speak for themselves. There is no need for me to respond point by point. Readers can read, and authors can write, and the discussion will continue. I would simply offer some observations about how the discussion is conducted, especially in light of the above letters.

The issue is not as simple as these let-

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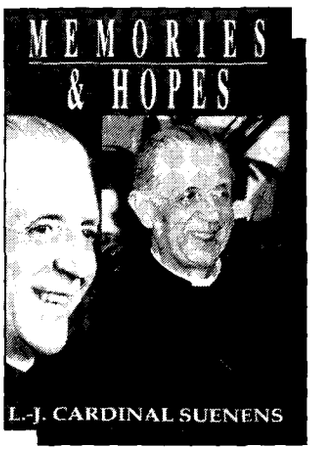

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ters would seem to make it, namely, that you are either "pro-*Humanae vitae*" or "anti-*Humanae vitae*." There are many thoughtful and reflective people who affirm what the encyclical affirmed about the nature and dignity of marital love, and about the need for sacrifice. They have difficulty, however, with the absolute prohibition of artificial contraception as always intrinsically evil, regardless of the circumstances. When they raise questions about this one point, they are branded as "anti-*Humanae vitae*," which is very misleading and gives the false impression that Catholics are divided into two positions: artificial birth control is never permitted, or artificial birth control is always permitted. To question the former is not to affirm the latter, nor is it to make one automatically a proponent of hedonism, consumerism, or materialism.

The same thing happens when people are simply categorized as "pro-magisterium" or "anti-magisterium." This has been very detrimental to the teaching authority of church leadership. It gives the impression that any Catholic who disagrees with any church teaching is anti-magisterium. Since there appear to be many Catholics who question some church teaching, one might wrongly conclude that the magisterium can be cavalierly dismissed. This is a serious problem. We need strong magisterial leadership. But if it is presented as "all or nothing on everything," its true and essential function is seriously damaged even by legitimate dissent—like a bridge built with no provision for expansion or contraction. It should be noted that, had there not been some provision for this in the past, we would not be allowed to promote natural family planning today.

Finally, I can see from this and other correspondence that there is a great misunderstanding on the *sensus fidelium*. It is much easier to say what it is not (not a poll, not a head count, not a majority vote) than what it is. But it does exist, and is part of our traditional ecclesiology, and needs to be understood properly and taken seriously. I note that it is treated briefly in the new *Catechism*. That is progress, for it has not been part of our standard lexicon, nor has attentiveness to it been part of our standard practice for many, many generations. It is key, I believe, to the future of the church.

BISHOP KENNETH UNTENER

Israel's other face

East Hampton, N.Y.

To the Editors: By strange coincidence, on the same day I read Abigail McCarthy's heartwarming story about a group of teenage American blacks finding friendship, love, and a sense of family on a kibbutz in Israel ["From Bed-Sty to Israel," July 16], I also read the names and manner of death of thirty-three Palestinian children under sixteen who were shot to death by Israeli soldiers and undercover agents in the occupied territories in the first four months of this year [*The Washington Report on Middle East Affairs*, July/August 1993].

We are fortunate that the cameras were rolling and that the story of how these Brooklyn youngsters found salvation and themselves, thanks to caring Israelis, will be told to perhaps millions of Americans in theaters and through articles like Ms. McCarthy's.

We are less fortunate that very few Americans will learn the stories of the Palestinian youngsters killed between January 1 and May 17 of this year—for example, the stories of twenty-month-old Faris Mohammed Kuri, who was shot in the chest while holding his father's hand as they inadvertently walked into the path of Israelis in "hot pursuit," and of fifteen-year-old Ahed Abdullah Mohammed Abed Diab, shot at a distance of six feet by Israeli undercover agents. (Yes, he was masked and writing political graffiti; is that a crime that warrants instant death?) Among the others killed in those four months were stone throwers, a mentally retarded twelve-year-old playing with a toy gun, and others who merely happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong moment.

Thanks to one group of Israelis, troubled teen-agers from 5,000 miles away may now find a chance for a better life. But Israeli soldiers and their government have denied that chance forever to youngsters who lived on their own doorstep.

JOSEPH D. POLICANO

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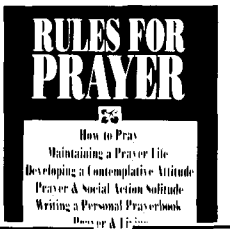

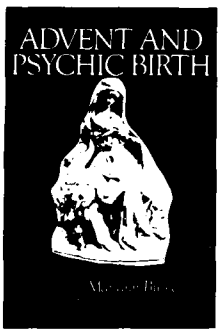

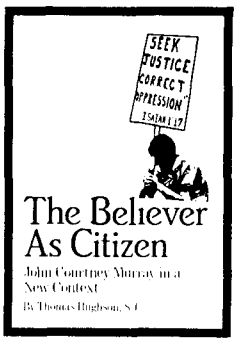

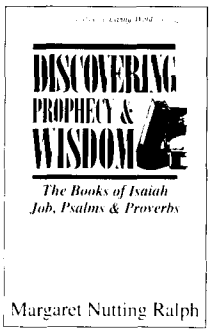

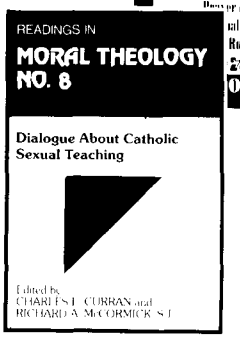

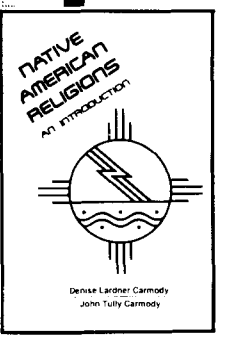

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